

12. Dec.

Three Discourses;

One on the PARABLE of

Dives *and* Lazarus,

The Second on that of

The Unjust Steward,

And the Third, on that of the

Ten *VIRGINS*.

By the Reverend

Mr. CLEMENT ELLIS,

RECTOR of Kirby, and PREBENDARY
of SOUTHWELL.

With a PREFACE,

Giving some Account of the Author's WRI-
TINGS and LIFE.

L O N D O N :

Printed for Nevil Simmons, Bookseller, in
Sheffield. MDCCIV.

47

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To the Reverend
CLERGY,
Especially those of
Nottinghamshire.

Reverend Gentlemen,

TH E Generous Incouragement which many of you were pleas'd to give, to the Proposal I lately made of publishing my Fathers Posthumous Works, by so freely Subscribing thereunto, obliges me to take this Opportunity of Acknowledging that Favour, and crave leave to commit to your Patronage and Protection this Volume, which

The Dedication.

is but a small part of those, no-
less correct Works, which he had
prepar'd for the Press. The rest
will speedily follow, if encourag'd
by the success of this, which (from
the Usefulness of the subject Mat-
ter, and your Favour towards it)
I have no room to doubt.

Gentlemen, 'tis on your Good-
ness that I must depend, for the
furtherance of this Work, as also
for your Pardon, and candid Ac-
ceptance of this Address, from
him, who, with the highest Respect
and Veneration, subscribes him-
self, Your very humble Servant,
J. B. ENTS.

THE PARABLE

OF THE

Rich MAN and the Beggar.

St. LUKE XVI. xix, &c.

19. There was a certain rich Man which was
cloathed in Purple and fine Linnen, and fared
sumptuously every Day.

20. And there was a certain beggar, named Laza-
rus, which was laid at his Gate, full of Sores:

21. And desiring to be fed with the Crumbs which
fell from the rich Man's Table: Moreover, the
Dogs came and licked his Sores.

22. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and
he was carried by the Angels into Abraham's Bosom:

23. The rich Man also died, and was buried.

24. And in Hell he lift up his Eyes, being in Tor-
ments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Laza-
rus in his Bosom.

B

24. And

24. And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his Finger in Water, and cool my Tongue; for I am tormented in this Flame.
25. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy Life-time received thy good Things, and likewise Lazarus evil Things: But now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.
26. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great Gulf fixed: So that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from you.
27. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my Father's House.
28. For I have five Brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.
29. Abraham saith unto him, they have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them.
30. And he said, nay, Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.
31. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

THE Things which our Blessed Saviour teacheth us in this Parable, (for that it is a Parable, I think any one that deliberately reads it will soon be satisfied) are Matters of so great Weight, and so altogether necessary for all Men to know; that whosoever doth not competently Understand, stedfastly Believe, and frequently with much Seriousness consider them; whatsoever he may find to comfort and please himself

himself withal at present, will in the end find himself a very unhappy Man. To convince us of this, no more can be needful, but to have them plainly laid open before our Eyes, that we may see them. They are such as these,

1. *We Men are something more than Bodies, we have Souls in these Bodies of ours; or rather, we are at present imbodyed Souls, or Souls dwelling and acting in Bodies.*
2. *Our Souls are not so inseparably united to our Bodies, but that they can be parted from them, and may subsist and live in that State of Separation, or when they are departed out of their Bodies.*
3. *Our Souls departing out of our Bodies at Death, do neither Die, nor Sleep, or continue insensible of their State and Condition, till the Resurrection of their Bodies; but Live, and are sensible.*
4. *Our Souls immediately after their departing out of our Bodies, are either in a very comfortable, or in a very miserable Condition,*
5. *The State of Souls departed out of our Bodies, is thus far unchangeable; that they which are once Miserable, can never be Happy; and they that are once in any measure Happy, can never be Miserable.*
6. *The time of this present Life on Earth, is no more but a time of Probation, and the only time of our Preparation, for a better and eternal Life in another World.*
7. *The Rule and Law whereby we are to govern our selves in this Life, and to prepare our selves for a better Life after Death, is the Doctrine which God hath already taught us by Men, whom he hath sent unto us to that end.*

8. *Good Men living in Obedience to God, may suffer great Affliction in this World, so long as they live in it ; and evil Men disobeying God, may live all their Life-time in great Prosperity.*
9. *Good Men after Death shall be for ever comforted, and bad Men after Death shall be for ever tormented.*

When we are told of such Things as these, one would think it almost an impossible thing, that any one who hath any use of his reason left him, should so behave himself, as if he were unconcerned whether they be true or false. Now these Things (as will appear anon) are all very plainly told us in this Parable, by that great God, who in condiscension to the Infirmities of our humane Nature, was graciously pleased in our Flesh to dwell (as in a *Tabernacle*) amongst us, that he might the more familiarly instruct us ; and to humble himself to Death, even the Death of the Cross, that he might save us ; and to declare himself the Son of God with Power, by his Resurrection from the Dead, to convince us of the Truth of all that he hath taught us. He, I say, whose Business into this lower World was, in most tender Compassion to us sinful Men, to redeem us from Death by his precious Blood, to bring Life and Immortality to light, through his Gospel, to make for us, and shew unto us both by his Life and Doctrine the way to Blessedness, even He, the Glorious God, and our most Gracious Saviour, hath told us these Things, and confirmed the Truth of all that he hath told us by many Miracles. And yet so brutish and Rupid have our Lusts made a great many of us, that we live as regardless of all that he hath told us, as if they were

were the veriest *trifles* in the World, such as deserve not our *enquiry*, or so much as a *serious Thought*.

But if nothing in the time of our *Health* and *Prosperity* will awake us to a *serious Consideration* of the Things which belong unto our eternal Peace, whilst we have time before us to make sure of them; *Sickness* and *Affliction* possibly may startle us into sad *Fears* and *Doubts*, what will become of us when we Die? And we shall not then be able our selves, nor any other for us, to speak peace to our distracted Souls and Consciences, which now we make a shift one way or other to lay fast a sleep. However, the *flames* of Hell will bring us to our *Feeling*, when all peace shall be hid from our Eyes, and our Consciences be everlastingly stung and tortured with Horror and Despair.

To make us the more sensible of these Things now in time, whilst the *Sins* of them may do us good, and move us to *Repentance*, and to such a Behaviour in this World, as may fit us for the blessedness of the World to come; our Blessed and Merciful JESUS hath in this *Parable*, as it were painted them out in most lively Colours, as on a *Table* or *Picture*, wherein the *Images* of them are very fairly represented to our Eyes. Here we see two Men in very different Garbs and Postures. These two are both *Jews*, the Sons of *Abraham* according to the *Flesh*; both of the *Synagogue*, professing one and the same *Religion*; and both visible Members of the true *Church* of God, under the Ministry of *Moses*, and the *Prophets*. But the one of these is a good Man, and the other a very wicked one. The wicked Man, is a rich Man, flourishing in *Prosperity*, and swimming in carnal *Pleasures*. Lo, here he sits in his

stately Palace, splendidly cloathed in *Purple and fine Linnen*; and hath his Table richly furnished with whatever may please the *Palate*, pamper his *Body*, and feed his *Lusts*; he knows not what either *hunger* or *fasting* mean, but *fareth sumptuously every Day*. The good and pious Man is not in this *plentiful and healthful* Condition, but is a very *Beggar*; his name is *Lazarus*, as much as to say, *God help him*, poor Man, for 'tis plain he has but few *Friends*, that are either able or willing to do much for him, else would he not lye in that *Posture* yonder without, where they have *laid* him for an *Alms*, at the rich Man's *Gate*; with a diseased *Body full of Sores*; and an empty *Belly desiring to be fed*; not with *Dainties*, no, he would be glad of any small thing, even the *Crumbs and Scraps*, which fall from the rich Man's *Table*, the *Off-falls* which those *Dogs* are fed withal, which now *lick his Sores*, and add to his *Affliction*. Thus in this *Life*, 'tis often seen, that all *Things* are with *wicked Men*, even according to their own *Hearts desire*, and they seem to be the very *Darlings and Favourites of Heaven*; whilst the pious Man that feareth *God* lies in greatest *Misery*, as if he were the only *Object of God's Displeasure*, and not thought worthy of so good an *Entertainment* in this *World*, as that which rich Men's *Dogs* do find.

But we must not stop here; see there how the *Scene* is changed. See I say, how the poor *Beggar* smiles at *Death*, and welcomes his *seasonable approach* with these *triumphant Words*, *O Death where is thy Sting?* See where his *ulcerous Body* lyeth, he careth not where; let the *Dogs* tear it, or the *Grave* swallow it up; his
Soul

Soul is got out of Prison, and is convey'd by a number of the heavenly Host, the glorious *Angels* of God, into the *Bosom* of blessed *Abraham*. Nor doth the *rich Man* long out-live him. See where Death has stung him yonder to the Heart, strip'd him of all his *Purple* and *fine Linnen*, removed out of his sight all his *sumptuous Fare*; and put a sad end to all his Days of Feasting, carrying him out of his brave Palace into a Bed of Dust, and serving up his pampered Body for the Worms to feed upon, thus putting an end to all his Wealth, and Joy, and Glory, at once.

But now observe and tremble: Whilst this *rich Man's Body* is here as we see carried to the Grave, his *Soul* is represented to us yonder in another place; the same *rich Man* is both buried in the Earth, and scorched in *Flames*; his *Body* is in his Sepulchre, his *Soul* is in Hell. Whatever he thought before, he now feels, that he hath a *Soul*; a *Soul* that *died not*, but was only parted from the *Body* by Death; and now to his sorrow, it *sleeps not* neither, nor lyeth *insensible* of his State: For as low as it is sunk into Hell, it is *sensible*, that *Abraham* is exalted far above it into a State of Glory, and that the lately despised *Lazarus* is at rest in his *Bosom*. He is sensible, even whilst his *Body* feels no more than the Earth or Stones about it, of Torments in Hell; and fain he would have ease, yea, ease by any Hand; yea, he would kiss the ulcerous Hand of poor scorned *Lazarus*, for the least Refreshment. A drop of *Water* falling on his Tongue from the tip of *Lazarus*, his *Finger*, would now be sweeter to him, than all his *sumptuous Fare* was in his *Life-time*. Since he hath, and

earnest *longings* of Soul, but all to no purpose but to Torment him.

For see, how little he prevails by begging of *Father Abraham*; no more than *Lazarus* did by begging of him before. 'Tis harder now for him to obtain of *Abraham* a drop of *Water*, than it was for *Lazarus* to obtain of him a *Crumb* of *Bread*. All that *Father Abraham* above can now do for his *Son* in *Hell*, is to add to his Torments by rubbing up his Memory. *Son* (saith he) remember. He must in *Hell* be sensible, not only of his present Torments; but to encrease them of his past Enjoyments too, and of the Impossibility he is now under of enjoying the least good thing for the future. He must not now forget, tho' fain he would, how he demeaned himself in his *Life-time*, how vainly he wasted his *Time* whilst he had it; what ill Use he made of the many good Things he then possessed; how foolishly he chose for himself in making those Things his Portion. He must be cast into despair, by the sight of that *unpassable Gulf* that is fixed betwixt him, and all the least Degrees of *Comfort*; betwixt *Lazarus*, and all the least Degrees of *Sorrow* or *Disturbance*.

Neither is all this enough, to shew us the wicked Man's miserable Condition in *Hell*. He is only sensible of his own loss and pain, and tormented at once with *longings* and *despair* of bettering his sad Condition; but he is also perplexed with dismal Apprehensions of the great Danger of his five Brethren falling into the same. These he had left behind him on the Earth, and now he knows, what neither he nor they would consider before, That unless they repent in time, they

they must very shortly lye all miserable together in *Hell*. See how there he is petitioning *Abraham*, that *Lazarus* may be sent to his Father's House, to give warning to his Brethren, that they may not come into the same place of Torment, wherein he now is made sensible, he must forever abide. One from the dead (saith he) will persuade them to repent; though nothing else will work upon them, this will.

But observe what *Abraham* answereth to this Petition. He tells him, they stood in need of no such Messenger from the dead, neither would such an one, were he sent, prevail with them to repent. God had not left them without sufficient Witness of his Will, he had already sent into the World *Moses*, and the Prophets to testifie unto them. These (saith he) thy Brethren have; their Books, which were written for their use, are in their Hands, and read in their Synagogues, let them bear them. Here they have a certain Rule of Faith and Life, whereby, if they will govern themselves, they shall do well. If these will not suffice them, one from the dead will not. He that would when he dieth, go into *Abraham's Bosom*, and not lye in *Hell* tormented in those flames with thee, must be content with, and make good Use of the means and helps, which God hath been pleased in his Word to give and direct him to, and not expect such Evidences and Helps as himself thinks most proper.

Thus hath our blessed Saviour laid *Paradise* and *Hell* both open before our Eyes at once; and shew'd us by what Rule we must walk, if we desire to be happy when Death puts an end to our Pilgrimage on Earth. Let us devoutly pray unto Him, who hath set all Things, which are
of

of greatest Concernment to us, in so clear a *light* before us; that he would give us *Eyes* to see them, and *Hearts* to consider them; and that he would help us all by his *holy Spirit* to profit by them, and to receive thankfully, and make a right Use of all that *Instruction, Direction* and *Consolation* in the way of Righteousness and Life, which it was his gracious Design in this *Parable* to give us. To this end, let us consider,

- I. *What kind of Persons these two are, which are here commended to our Observation?*
- II. *What manner of departure they had out of this World?*
- III. *What was their Condition immediately after Death?*
- IV. *What Discourse is supposed to have been held between Abraham above, and the rich Man below.*

I. The first thing to be considered is, *What kind of Persons these two are, which are here commended to our Observation?* There was (saith our Saviour) a certain rich Man, (his name he mentioneth not) and there was a certain Beggar, named Lazarus.

These two Persons, the rich Man, and the Beggar, are both of them here represented to us as the Sons of Abraham; that is, of Abraham's Race, and Branches of his Family. They are both *Jews*, and by Profession, Members of the then true Church, and of the peculiar People of God. They were both Partakers of the same Sacraments, Circumcision, and the Passover; and they had Moses, and the Prophets, read unto them; They enjoy'd the same Privileges, and had the same

same means of Knowledge, and of Holiness: But they did not both make the same good Use and Improvement of them. *Abraham* was a very great Man, the Friend of God; and to *Abraham*, and his Seed were the promises given. The *Jews* were God's chosen and peculiar People, to them pertained the Adoption, and the Glory, and the Covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the Service of God, and the Promises; and of them, as concerning the Flesh, *Christ* came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. It was therefore no small Privilege or Honour to be of the Seed of *Abraham*, and of the Church of the *Jews*. But alas, all these Honours and Privileges, all these means and helps profited the rich Man nothing, because they did not make him a good Man. All the Seed of *Abraham*, are not to be reckoned for the Children of *Abraham*. *Abraham* believed God, and it was accounted to him for Righteousness. And they which are of Faith, the same are the Children of *Abraham*, and blessed with faithful *Abraham*, Gal. 3. 6, 7, 9. They are not all *Israel*, which are of *Israel*. Neither because they are the Seed of *Abraham*, are they all Children, Rom. 9. 6, 7. He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that Circumcision, which is outward in the Flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and Circumcision is that of the Heart, in the Spirit, and not in the Letter, whose praise is not of Men, but of God. Circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the Law; but if thou be a breaker of the Law, thy Circumcision is made Uncircumcision, Rom. 2. 25, 28, 29.

Here then was the great Difference between these two Sons of *Abraham*. The one was a good Man, and kept the Law; and the other did not. The rich Man was indeed of the stock of *Abraham*,

ham, but the Beggar was also of the faith of Abraham. The rich Man had the Circumcision of the Flesh, but the Beggar had also the Circumcision of the Heart. The former had the Law written on Tables of Stone, but the latter had it also written in his Mind, and in the fleshy Tables of his Heart. The rich Man heard Moses, and the Prophets, but the Beggar obeyed them also. Hence the Beggar became the Child of God, whilst the rich Man continued a Child of the Devil.

Tho' we be not of Abraham's Seed according to the Flesh, we are not one jot the worse for that, if so be that we have the faith of Abraham. Abraham is the Father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; of them that walk in the steps of that Faith, which Abraham had being yet uncircumcised. The promise is made sure to all the Seed, not to that only which is of the Law; but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the Father of us all, Rom. 4, 11, 12, 16. Indeed it is no great matter what Man upon Earth, rich or poor, honourable or base, good or bad, was our Father; so that we be the Children of God by faith in Christ JESUS. It is nothing to us, whether we are come of Jewish or Gentile Ancestors, whether we be of noble or of mean Extraction, the Children of Princes, or of Beggars, we are neither the better nor the worse Men on this account. Yea, though we be in outward Conformity and Profession Members of the purest and best constituted Church in the whole World; and tho' we have been solemnly dedicated to the worship and service of the ever blessed and most Glorious TRINITY in the holy Sacrament of Baptism, and tho' we daily partake in all the holy Ordinances of Christ and

and enjoy all the external Priviledges of Christians : Yet we are to know, that no Formalities of Profession, no Ceremonies of Religion, no Sacrifice or Sacrament, no hearing or reading, no long Prayers, or loud Praises, no glorious Outside, or affected and glorying Inside of Religion will avail us any thing, so long as we want the faith of Abraham. That faith, I say, we must have which worketh by love, Gal. 5. 6. That faith which overcometh the World, 1 Joh. 5. 4. That faith whereby even against hope, we can believe in hope, and not stagger at the promises of God through unbelief, Rom. 4. 18, 20. That Faith, which being the substance of Things hoped for, the evidence of Things not seen, persuadeth us in Expectation of a City which hath Foundations, whose builder and maker is God, to go forth chearfully, which way soever it pleaseth God to call us, tho' we know not whither we go ; and all along to behave our selves in this World, as Sojourners in a strange Country : As Travellers towards Heaven. In short, it must be such a faith, as will make the poor Man rich in Hope, and the rich Man poor in Spirit ; the poor Man Patient and Content, and the rich Man Charitable and Liberal : Yea, as will make the rich Man, whensoever Christ commands it, to sell all that he hath, and distribute unto the poor, and follow his Saviour for inexhaustible Treasures in Heaven, Luke 18. 22. This is the faith of Abraham, which lodged poor Lazarus in Abraham's Bosom ; and for want of which the rich Man was cast into the flames of Hell.

That he was rich, was not the rich Man's Sin. Neither was it a Virtue in the poor Man to be poor. There have been, and I hope, there are yet some good rich Men in the World ; and I am too sure

sure of it, that there are many *wicked poor Men*. There be *good and bad* of both sorts, the *rich and the poor*; and it may possibly be as hard to find many *poor Men* such as was *Lazarus*; as it is, *easier to find too many rich Men*, such as was this *rich Epicure* in the Parable. The *Philosopher* that cast his riches into the Sea, because he thought it impossible to be at once both *rich and virtuous*; was not so *wise as rich*; and if some of the *antient Christians* have commended him for it, they have shewn therein more *Zeal than Knowledge*. The Lord maketh *poor, and maketh rich*, 1 Sam. 2. 7. Both *riches and honour* come of God, 1 Chron. 29. 12. God made *Abraham rich, and Lazarus poor*; and they were both *good Men*, and both are *happy together in Heaven*. But neither is the *one* there, because he was *rich*, nor the *other*, because he was *poor*; but because through *Wisdom, and the fear of God*, they had attained to *durable riches and righteousness*, Prov. 8. 18. As *Elibu* saith, God regardeth not the *rich more than the poor*, for they are all the *work of his Hands*, Job 24. 19. So neither regardeth he *poor* more than the *rich*, for the same reason. God accepteth not the *Person of the poor* more than of any other; *he alone that feareth him, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted of him*, Act. 10. 35. God hath stored the *Earth and the Sea with Riches* for the use of *Men*; but God hath not given *Men Riches* to bestow as the *Philosopher* upon the Sea. Which way soever the *Steward* throws away his *Master's Goods*, he *wasteth* them, and must be called to *account* for the *waste* he hath made. There is indeed a better and more profitable way for us to cast away our *Wealth*, if we have a mind to be *honestly and advantageously* rid

rid of it; so as both we and others may be gainers by it in the end. *Cast thy Bread* (saith Solomon) *upon the Waters, and thou shalt find it after many Days,* Eccl. 11. 1. Lo, here's the Sea into which the Christian Philosopher will cast his Wealth, the poor and needy; *Pity these, and so lend unto the Lord, of that which he hath given thee, and he will pay thee again,* Prov. 19. 17.

Yet, it must be confessed, that Riches bring along with them very powerful Temptations to many Sins; and that most Men for want of *Abraham's faith*, are too weak to resist these Temptations, and are easily overcome by them. And therefore said our Saviour, *A rich Man shall hardly* (yea, very hardly) *enter into the Kingdom of Heaven,* Mat. 19. 23. But he hath told us withal, that *with God nothing is impossible*, he that giveth Riches, can give Grace too: And, in truth, he that hath much Wealth, had need to have very much Grace too, or else he is certainly undone by his Wealth for ever. The rich Man, if he would not have his Riches sink him into Hell, must turn Beggar in time, and beg incessantly, that he be not led into Temptation, and a Snare, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown Men in Destruction and Perdition, 1 Tim. 6. 9. And if the case be so with him, that he finds himself after all his Endeavours, too weak for his load of Wealth, and unable to bear up under it from falling into Sin; it will certainly be a wiser part to drown his Riches, than to let them drown him. It will be good Husbandry to use his Wealth, as our Saviour commands us to use the offending Hand or Foot, cut them off, (saith he) and cast them from thee. It is better sure with Lazarus, to go into Heaven without Riches

Riches, than having abundance of *Wealth* to be cast with the *rich Man* into *Hell*. But then, as was before said, the only warrantable way of casting away our *Riches*, is to dispose of them as he directs us, who bestowed them upon us.

And yet the *Temptations* which accompany *extream Poverty* are, if not as many, yet as powerful, as those which attend abundance, and no less measure of *Grace* is needful to strengthen us against them, than against the *Temptations* of *Riches*; and therefore well did *Agur* join them together in his Prayer. Give me (saith he) neither *Poverty* nor *Riches*, feed me with food convenient for me. Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain, *Prov.* 30. 8, 9. *Extream want* is not easily borne, but Nature pinched hard with it, will struggle hard too, even against the *Laws of God*, to relieve it self; and if not restrained by the *Power of Grace*, will break them all rather than suffer very much.

Whoso therefore wisely consults the safety of his own Soul, will not make either of the two *extreams* his choice: Seeing it is no *Wisdom* for any one to ensnare himself in *Temptations*, which require a greater strength than a Man's own, to master them. It is enough, and (as a great many of us make it too manifest) too much for most of us, to manage any considerable stock of *Riches* so as we ought to do, when by the *Providence of God* they fall to our share, without our seeking for them. It is good advice which *Solomon* gives us. *Prov.* 23. 4 Labour not to be rich: Cease from thine own *Wisdom*. We are too apt to account it *Wisdom*, to scrape up to together as much of the World as we can get, for our selves
and

and our Children ; but certainly it is a great Folly to run into strong Temptations. *He that maketh haste to be rich, shall not be innocent, Prov. 28. 20. Therefore, having Food and Raiment, let us be therewith content, 1 Tim. 6. 8.* For this we ought to Labour, and for this we are taught to Pray, saying, *Give us this Day our daily Bread.*

What then was the Sin of this rich Man ? Was it this, that he was clothed in Purple and fine Linnen ? It is certain, that it is not always a Sin to wear such clothing. Every one may Clothe himself according to his Rank and Quality. And he who is no otherwise apparalled than is suitable to his Rank, may, tho' he wear Purple and fine Linnen, be more pious and humble, than a Beggar in his Rags. As God hath ordained, that there shall be several Orders and Degrees of Dignity and Pre-eminence among Men in the World ; so may all these be distinguished, and known asunder by their Habits ; which may differ each from other, as well in the matter, as in the form, in the richness, as in the fashion. God hath furnished the World with great Variety of Things fit to be worn. The Priests of old had a very rich Attire, and costly Vestments, even of Gold, and pretious Stones, Purple, and fine Linnen, commanded by God himself, wherein they were to Minister before him in their Offices. Princes and Magistrates had their Royal Robes, and costly Ornaments ; and were not rebuked or blamed by any of the Prophets for such Matters. The bare wearing of such costly and glorious Apparel, was not the fault of this rich Man, supposing him to be a Person of such an Order or Degree, as that this Habit might be suitable to it.

Was it then his Sin, that he *far'd sumptuously*? Truly, for a *rich Man* to keep a better *Table* than the *poor* can do; to eat *better* or *costlier* Meat, and to drink *better* and *costlier* drink. than poor Men are able to afford themselves, I cannot think to be a fault, but a thing very decent. And if such an one do sometimes *feast* and *fare sumptuously*, there may be very good Reason for it, and then it very well becomes him to do so, *rejoicing in God*, and observing the *Laws of Moderation, Sobriety and Charity*. The best Men in all Ages have used on just Occasions such *sumptuous Feasting*. And the Holy JESUS refused not to go, and be present at such *Feasts*, where he was *richly* entertain'd, and where he himself was pleased, to *add* to the *richness* of the Entertainment, at the expence of a *Miracle*, turning *Water into Wine*, Jo. 2.

And yet after all this, I make no question of it, but that our *Saviour*, by this Description which he gives of this *rich Man*, would teach us what his chief *Vices* were, for which he was condemned to *Hell*. Telling us, that he was *clothed in Purple and fine Linnen*, and that he *far'd sumptuously every Day*; whilst poor *Lazarus* lay at his Gate full of Sores, and desirous of a small *Alms*; he doth as good as tell us, that we are to look upon this *rich Man*, not as a *Magistrate*, or a *Person dignified*, and set aloft above his Neighbours, for any *real worth* was in him, or any *special Service* he did to his *Prince or Country*; but as a *vain, proud, sensual and uncharitable Epicure*, whatever he was besides, wholly addicted to the *Vanities* of the *World*, and the *pleasures of the Flesh*; all whose *Business* was about the *lust of the Eyes, the lust of the Flesh, and the pride of Life*.

Life. He was a lover of Pleasures, more than a lover of God, one who had set his Affections on Things below, placing all his Happiness in taking his fill of this World, and in humoring and gratifying his carnal Mind and Appetite: Or, as we say, in leading a Gentleman's Life. God had granted him a large Portion of this World's good Things, and in this was his Heart's delight; these he loved more than he did the giver of them; and could by no means Esteem himself in any measure happy, without the liberty of abusing them at his Pleasure, and himself with them. He was in the same Mind with that other rich Man in another Parable. Luke 12. 19. He said to his Soul, Soul thou hast much goods laid up for many Years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. Never regarding how soon God would call his Soul out of the World, and he should leave all behind him, and he knew not to whom. He considered not himself to be but a stranger and a sojourner here, as all his Fathers had been before him. He remembered not his Stewardship under God, nor the account which he was shortly to be called unto; but as if all had been absolutely his own, and he had had no other Law to govern himself by, but that brutish Appetite, he Sacrific'd all freely to his Lusts.

His Purple and fine Linnen, were the Demonstrations of his Pride and Vanity. Why did he not content himself with a more modest and homely Dress? But that he had a mind to appear some Body in the World. The most splendid and glorious, the most costly and fashionable sort of Apparel then in Use amongst great Ones, such as Persons of highest Place and Dignity were wont to wear, he must needs have to swagger in, and

to set himself out with to the *sight* and *admiration* of Men. What good would his *riches* do him? if they made him not look like a *Gentleman*? And tho' wise Men can never be persuaded, that *fine Cloths* can make a *Man* of a *Swine*, or a *brave Gentleman* of a *luxurious Epicure*; yet he knew there would be always *Fools* enough in the World, who never think a *Man* to be of any more *worth*, than the *Suit* he hath on his back, and that he who wants *Honour* and *Worship*, needs do no more for it, but go to his *Draper* and *buy* it. There always will be some, who will account him the most *glorious*, that *glorieth in his shame*; for so doth he that *glorieth in his Cloths*, which no *Man* should so much as once think upon, without considering what a *shame* it is to him, that he *needs* them.

It must be confessed, that *rich Cloaths* do not make any one *proud*, any more than they can make him *good* or *honourable*; nor are they always *signs* of *pride* in him that weareth them. A *Prince* or *Nobleman* may be more *humble* in all his outward glory, than the most ragged *Beggar*; and a *Beggar* himself may wear a rich *Suit* of *Cloaths* that's given him, when he hath no other to cover his nakedness, or to keep him warm, and yet be as *humble* as ever. Yet certain it is, that tho' *fine Cloaths* cannot make one *proud*, *Pride* doth too often make *fine Cloaths*; and let them never be condemned for me, where *Pride*, or something else as *bad*, directs not the *Buyer* or the *Tailor*. Let every one consider what his *Rank* and *Order* calleth for, and what is well consistent with *Humility*, *Modesty*, *Charity* and *Decency*; and he may

may be a good Man, tho' he be richly cloathed for ought I know.

But this *rich Man* was an *Epicure* in his Diet, as well as in his Cloaths. He was a *Slave* to his *Palate*, and made a *God* of his *Belly*; indulging his *Genius*, he gave himself wholly up to a voluptuous Life of continual *Feasting* and *Meriment*. He did not only fare well and plentifully, but richly, sumptuously and deliciously; he did not fare thus sometimes only, as there might be fit occasions for it, but he did so always; he fared sumptuously every Day. He did not eat and drink, and use other lawful Delights, only for the preservation of Life and Health, for Nourishment and Strength, with Moderation and Thanksgiving to God, for the Refreshment and Exhilarating, or chearing up of his Spirits and Soul: But for the pleasure of eating, and drinking and merry Company; and this as often as he could, it being his constant and ordinary way of living, so that when he was not at it, he was out of his Rode, and out of his Element, and knew not what to do with himself, but either to lie down and Sleep, or to call out his Dogs to seek more Provision for his Belly. This it should seem, was the Life of this rich Gentleman, and thus he spent his precious Time.

Many such Gentlemen as this we now every where meet with, and with a great many more that would be such, if they knew how. Indeed many of us for want of his Riches are not able to live so sumptuously every Day as he did; but most of us endeavour it all we can, and strain our Estates for it even till they break. We cannot think our selves People of any Note, or that the People among whom we live, will shew

us any respect, if we come not as near this rich Man's sumptuous way of living, as our Purses will carry us, tho' it may be they will hold none but other Men's Money, and that not long. If we do not bestow three Times more cost and pains, and time on our meat and drink, than is needful for our Nourishment, Health, and moderate Refreshment; yea, if we be not at all this expence to make our food only more curious for the Eye, which cannot feed on it; and less wholesome and nourishing to the Body; we are even ashamed of our selves, and afraid that any should see us eat. Our meat must be as fine and fashionable, as our Charbs; and even the best meat out of fashion is enough to make us sick. To get a dinner is become an art, that requires a great deal of Study, and she's no Housewife that is not perfect in it, or sends not every Dish that comes to the Table with something of mystery in it to be admired, and to help the Guests to some idle Discourses. Indeed almost all that's done in the Kitchen, is what St. Paul hath forbidden, a making Provision for the Flesh; and almost all that we do in the Parlor, is to fulfil the Lusts thereof. How much pains do we take to incur the woe? Luke 6. 25. *Wo unto you that are full, for you shall hunger.*

But that which rendered all other Sins of the rich Man more sinful, was his Unmercifulness, and want of Charity and Compassion to the poor and needy, such especially as Lazarus. He had a fine House to feast in, and sumptuously to entertain the rich like himself, or a Company of loose Companions and Spendbrifts, who were wont to spend their time as vainly as he did his Riches; but he had never a poor Lodging for the good

good Beggar that lay at his Gates. He had Purple and fine Linnen for his own Pride, but not so much as any coarse piece of Cloth to cover the Beggar's Nakedness and Sores. He could glut himself and his fawning Parasites, on all manner of costly and delicious Rarities, even unto fulness and wanton si; but hungry Lazarus can hardly obtain the favour to feed with his Dogs on the Crumbs that fell from his Table. No Physician could be found for Lazarus, no Salve for his Sores, no Cloaths for his Nakedness, no meat to assuage his hunger. Would any one now, that saw how this rich Man behaved himself towards his poor Brother, have taken him for a Son of Abraham, or for an Israelite, who had heard Moses and the Prophets? Was Abraham wont at this rate to entertain the poor that came to his Gate? Did not Moses in God's Name give this command to the Israelites. Deut. 15. 7, 8. If there be among you a poor Man of one of thy Brethren within any of thy Gates, in thy Land which the LORD thy God giveth thee; thou shalt not harden thy Heart, nor shut thine Hand from thy poor Brother: But shalt open thine Hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need in that which he wanteth. And v. 10. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine Heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him; because that for this thing, the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy Works, and in all that thou puttest thine Hand unto? Did not God by the Prophets command, saying, Deal thy Bread to the hungry, bring the poor that are cast out to thine House; when thou seest the naked, cover him; and hide not thy self from thy own Flesh. If thou draw out thy Soul to the hungry, and satiate the afflicted Soul, then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and

and thy darkness be as the noon-day? Isa. 58. 7, 10. Would not one rather have thought this rich Man to have been bred in Sodom, and to have learn'd perfectly all the Iniquities thereof, which laid it in Ashes by fire from Heaven? Were not the Sins of Sodom, the Sins of this rich Man, to wit Pride, fulness of Bread, abundance of Idleness, and not strengthening the Hand of the poor and needy? Exek. 16. 29. Had he believed Moses and the Prophets, he would have been more sparing in feeding his own Lusts, and more open-handed to poor Lazarus, and so have laid up for himself treasures in Heaven, and not have laid out all his wealth to purchase Hell.

O that we would all learn to be wiser for our selves, than this Gentleman was. That we would learn to look beyond this World, and to live above the Vanities of it. Let us not love the World, neither the Things that are in the World, 1 John 11. If riches increase, set not your Heart upon them, Psal. 62. 10. Let not the rich Man glory in his riches, nor rejoice, because his wealth is great. Let him not make Gold his hope, nor say to the fine Gold, thou art my confidence: For he that trusteth to his riches shall fall, Prov. 11. 28. Charge them that are rich in this World, that they trust not to uncertain riches, 1 Tim. 6. 17. Wilt thou set thine Eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves Wings, they fly away as an Eagle towards Heaven, Prov. 23. 5. There's no way to be safely rich, but to be very indifferent, whether we be rich or no; to use this World as not abusing it, or as if we used it not, as a thing which we cannot use long, for the fashion of this World passeth away, 1 Cor. 7. 31. This indeed is good advice, but where are they who think

think not themselves too *wise* to follow it? What one of a hundred can find any thing else that he thinks worth *trusting* to but his *Wealth*? What are all the rich Promises of God either for this Life, or that which is to come to most of us, so long as we have not a considerable stock of Riches? If we have not a great *love* for them, and *confidence* in them; why are we so *restless* and uneasy to our selves, and others too in labouring for them? Why do we so much *envy* those that have them? Why do we so *impatiently* want them, and with so much *grief* and *sorrow* lose them? What a Hell upon Earth do most of us account it to be *poor*? O how many are there, that desire no other *Heaven*, and would much rather stay here for ever, and enjoy their *Riches*, than go to *Heaven* and *leave them*? It is too sad a truth, that if riches make themselves *Wings* and *fly away*; there are not a few that will *follow* them to *Hell* rather than *lose* them.

O that we would learn to be so *wise*, as to do our selves *good* with our *Wealth* whilst we have it, and not as the *rich Man* here, consume it all on our *Lusts*! That we had so much *wit* with our *Wealth*, as not to *undo* our selves for ever with it! And yet such *Fools* are many *rich Men*, that they make no other use of all that God hath given them, but to *destroy themselves* with it. So do all they, who spend their Estates as the *rich Man* here did in *faring sumptuously every Day*. He went *splendidly* and *merrily* to *Hell*, and how many esteem it their *honour* and their *happiness*, that they have *Wealth* enough to follow him thither in the same way? How little do Men of great Estates consider what a *price* God hath put into their Hand? How much *good* they may do

do both themselves and others, if they have a Heart to do it? What an honour God hath done them, in making them *Stewards* of so great a Portion of his Goods? And will they, who seem to be proud of an *Estate*, or of a *Title of Honour*, debase themselves; and rather chuse to be despicable *Swineherds*, than *God's Stewards*? Will they delight in feeding *Swine*, more than in ministering to the Family of the great *King* of all the World? Is it a greater honour to feed their brutish Lusts, which war against their Souls, than to relieve the poor, who daily pray for God's Blessing on them and theirs? If God would not endure a hard-hearted and unmerciful Jew, but sent him to Hell; What Plagues hath he in store for a surly and inhumane Christian? *Moses* charged the Jews liberally to relieve their Brethren, and our blessed Saviour by St. Paul hath commanded Christians, If their Enemy hunger to feed him; if he thirst to give him drink, Rom. 12. 10. He hath taught us by shewing mercy unto all Men, to shew our selves truly honourable, the Children of our Father which is in Heaven; who maketh his Sun to rise on the evil, and on the good; and sendeth Rain on the just, and on the unjust, Mat. 5. 45. St. Paul commanded Bishop *Timothy*, that he should charge rich Men, that they do good, that they be rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate: And to let them know that in so doing, they were not wasting, but encreasing their riches, he bids him tell them, that they were thus, Laying up in store for themselves a good Foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal Life, 1 Tim. 6. 18, 19. This is the way, a sure way for a rich Man to improve his Estate. Thus he may be sure

to *hoard* up for himself an everlasting Treasure. Thus hath our Saviour himself taught us to be provident Husbands for the future. I say unto you, make to your selves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting Habitations, Luke 16. 9. Sell all ye have, and give Alms; provide your selves Bags which wax not old, a treasure in the Heavens that faileth not, Luke 12. 33. Indeed it concerns us to take this course, not only for the improvement of our Happiness; but for the preventing of eternal Misery. Our blessed Saviour, who will one Day come to judge the quick and the dead, hath given us a fair warning to do good with our riches, telling us how he will then reckon with us for them. Mat. 25. 35, &c. To the charitable, he will then say, Come ye blessed Children of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. For inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me. But, v. 45. to the unmerciful he will say, Inasmuch as ye have not done it, unto one of the least of these, ye have not done it unto me. Therefore, depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.

Let the *buffing* Gentlemen swagger it out as he will now, he will be strangely *deuiced*, and his proud Spirit will droop, when he shall hear this The Man of honour, that will needs have his *basest* Sins to be *honourable* too, because they are his, and cannot think himself great enough, if he trample not his Tenants under his Feet, and make them both

drudge

drudge and fast at once to feed his Lusts, will then be glad to change Places with the meanest of them all. Do they, who despise and oppress the poor, ever think how they shall then be despised of God? Do they ever consider, that it is Christ, their Saviour, (that would be) and their Judge, (that shall be) towards whom they are now thus barbarous and inhuman?

Alas, such Persons as these, how ill soever they take it not to be accounted *Christians*, shew by their behaviour to all the World, that they have no fear of God before their Eyes, no love of *Christ* ruling in their Heart, no Sons either of Religion or true Honour. They as little believe *Christ* and his Apostles, as the rich Man did Moses and the Prophets. They are resolved, whatever comes on't hereafter, to eat, drink, and be merry now. And if they afford succour and relief to any others, or do any good Offices for them, it shall not be to any of those whom the blessed JESUS calls his Brethren; but for their own Brethren in iniquity, of which they never want great Store. They love not to disturb their Consciences, nor interrupt their Pleasures with any Thoughts of an after reckoning, when *Christ* shall judge the World in Righteousness. Their business is to *fare sumptuously every Day*, whatever others may want or pay for it now; or whosoever must pay for all in the end.

Pass we now from the rich Man to the Beggar, and let us consider what it was that commended him to God. We have already said, that it was not his Poverty that made him good, and therefore it was not that which made him happy in the end. Some rich Men may possibly imagine, that they are good, and that God hath a special

special *Kindness* to them, because he *prospereth* them in their *Estates*, and they *thrive*, and grow *richer* daily. This is a very dangerous Error, and possibly some *few* may be guilty of it. But I think that most *rich Men* are not so, most of them seeming never at all to concern themselves, whether they are *good* or *bad*, whether they be in *God's Favour* or no. All they think of is, how to be *rich*, and to enjoy as much pleasure as they can in the *World*; *goodness* with them is but an *empty Notion*, an *unprofitable Word*, that signifyeth *nothing*; nor can they believe there is any *Sins* in those words of *St. Paul*. 1 Tim. 6. 6. *Godliness with contentment is great gain*. Call but the *rich Man* Lord and Master, and let him be to you what you call him; and he'll be constant to call you *good Man*, because he takes you for a *Fool* for being so. But now on the other side *poor Men*, being in a Condition that admits of no other Commendation, but that which *goodness* causeth, are apt to have a higher esteem for *goodness*; and though they have it not, yet would fain have it thought they have, even for this reason, because they are *poor*, and have nothing else. God hath proclaimed himself to be the *poor Man's Patron* and Protector. He hath left a very strict charge and command, that the *poor* be taken care of, and well provided for. He hath promised to take the Cause of the *poor* and *needy* in his own Hand, and to revenge them, on them that oppress them. And hence they are too hasty to conclude, that if they be *poor*, they are *good* too and *God's Favourites*. Indeed if *poor Men* be *good*, they are no worse for their *Poverty*; that there

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is many a *poor Rogue* in the World is too well known.

Let no Man therefore think the better of himself, because he is *poor*; nor the worse of another, because he is *rich*. But let him that is *poor* see to it, that he behave himself *piously, patiently, contentedly, humbly, soberly and righteously*, and so he will prove himself to be a *good Man*. Such an one we must suppose *Lazarus* to be, and *this* it was, and not his *poverty*, that commended him to God.

Nay, because *poverty* is often caused by *Sin*, and is both the natural *Effect*, and just *Punishment* of it; it so ill becomes a *poor Man* to value himself upon the account of his *poverty*; that it behoves him to be very diligent in enquiring into himself, to see if it be not his own *Sin* and *Folly* which have brought him into that Condition. The *pious poor* have many promises from God, and may comfort themselves therein; but they, who by their *Sins* and *Vanities* bring themselves into *poverty*, make too bold with God in laying claim to his *Favour*, before they have truly repented them of their *Sins*.

Let them therefore, who are *poor* consider, if they be not, or have not been as *idle* as they are *poor*, and if their *idleness* either hath not made, or doth not keep them *poor*. It was the *Apostle's* command to the *Thessalonians*, That if any would not work, neither should he eat, 2 *Thess.* 3. 10. That with quietness they work, and eat their own Bread, v. 12. It is every one's Duty to be *industrious* in an *honest Calling*, to do some good in the World as long as he is able, and not as the *barrren Fig-tree* to serve for no good Use, but to cumber the Ground he stands on. Such an one deserves not to be
nourished;

nourished, but to be cut down: It's the great mercy of God, if poverty and want do not follow sloth and idleness, He becometh poor that deal-eth with a slack Hand; but the Hand of the diligent maketh rich, PROV. 10. 4. Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep, and an idle Soul shall suffer hunger, PROV. 19. 15. Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine Eyes and thou shalt be satisfied with Bread, PROV. 20. 13. Drowsiness shall cover a Man with Rags, PROV. 23. 21. The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his Hands refuse to labour, PROV. 21. 25. The sluggard will not Plow by reason of the cold, therefore shall he beg in Harvest and have nothing, PROV. 20. 4. The Soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing; but the Soul of the diligent shall be made fat, PROV. 13. 4. Go to the Ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise: She provideth her meat in the Summer, and gathereth her food in the Harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of thy Hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed Man, PROV. 6. 6, &c.

Let the poor consider again, if he have not made himself poor by faring too sumptuously every Day, whilst he had it to do so withal. Vain and sinful Expences in a little time, may exhaust and empty a large and full Purse. And he that wastes what he hath, and throws away prodigally and riotously that which he should live upon, hath no body but himself to blame for his want, and if he find none to pity him, or to succour him in his need, he must acknowledge it God's righteous judgment upon him for his Sin. The
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drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty, Prov. 23. 21. Therefore be not amongst Wine-bibbers, amongst riotous eaters of Flesh, v. 20. Let not thy lusts devour as much at a meal, as would sustain thee alive, and in good health a whole Month. It is very just, he should fast two Days, that eats and drinks up the allowance for three Days in one. A mean Estate is enough for a moderate and sober Person to live on both long and comfortably. Temperance is very rarely sensible of any want, and he that will rather come to want, than live temperately, deserves to be punished with his own choice. He that will waste his substance with riotous living, deserves to be Tantalized at the Swine-trough.

Was it not thy neglecting the Works of thy honest calling, to lead a merry and a jovial Life amongst thy vain Companions, that hath reduced thee to want and beggery? Was it not thy profuse spending what was given thee for the support of thy self and Family, and for the relief of such as stood in need; in vain Pleasures, and foolish Delights, on thine own and other Men's Sins and Wantonness? Hath not the Wealth thou once wast Master of, help'd thee rather to oppress the poor, than to relieve them; to bribe the rich, rather than to succour the Fatherless; to feed the lusts of thy Companions, rather than to maintain the Cause of the Widow? And is it not then just with God to leave thee now to eat of the Fruit of thine own way, and to be filled with thine own Devices? He that loveth pleasure, shall be a poor Man; he that loveth Wine and Oil, shall not be rich, Prov. 21. 17. And he that tilleth his Land, shall have plenty of Bread; but he that followeth

loweth after vain Persons, shall have poverty enough, Prov. 28. 19. He that oppresseth the poor to encrease his riches, and giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want, Prov. 22. 16. There is that scattereth, and yet entreaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal Soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth, shall be watered also himself. He that withholdeth Corn, the People shall curse him; but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it, Prov. 11. 24, &c.

Have we not neglected God, whilst we had enough? Did we depend upon him, and pray unto him for his Blessing daily, and praise him for all his Gifts? Did we trust to him only, and cast all our care upon him, and in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make our requests known unto him? Phil. 4. 6. Were we contented with God's Allowance? Were we not greedy and covetous of more than enough? Made we not an idol of our wealth? And did we not love it more than God? If we pray'd to God for a supply of our Wants, did we not therefore ask, and not receive, Because we asked amiss, that we might consume it upon our lusts? Jam. 4. 3. Did we not use evil and vain Arts to make our selves Rich? Wealth gotten by vanity, shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall encrease, Prov. 13. 11. Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, Prov. 10. 2. An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed, Prov. 10. 21. He that hasteth to be rich, hath an evil Eye; and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him, Prov. 28. 22.

It well becometh every poor Man to examine himself, whether or no he have been the cause of
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his own poverty by any such ways as these, before he comfort himself with thoughts of his being in God's favour, and entitled by his poverty to God's protection. For he that hath by vain and wicked courses brought himself into, or because of the same, continueth in that Condition, is as little favoured by God, as he is usually pitied by Men.

What then was it in *Lazarus* that commended him to God? Why, *Lazarus* had heard *Moses* and the *Prophets*, he believed and obeyed the word of God, which he spake by them; he attained through the grace of God to sincere Piety, and became devoted to God's worship and service, and formed his Life and Conversation according to the will of God. Had the rich Man done so too, his riches had not hurt him. And the poor Man's doing so sanctified his poverty, and made him rich towards God, and sure of God's Blessing. He sought first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, and left it freely to God to add other Things, when and in what measure he pleased: Knowing well, that the needy shall not alway be forgotten, the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever, Psal. 9. 19. He heareth the cry of the afflicted, Job 34. 28. He delivereth the poor in his Affliction, and openeth their Ears in Oppression, Job 36. 15. Thou, O God, hast of thy goodness prepared for the poor, Psal. 68. 10. God hath chosen the poor of this World, rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him, Jam. 11. 5. It was his love to God, that made all things work together for his good, Rom. 8. 28. So that his light Affliction, which was but for a mo-

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ment, wrought for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. 2 Cor. 4. 17.

Lazarus was as humble, as he was poor; as lowly in his own eyes, as he was despicable in the rich Man's. He lay with patience, and a contented mind at the rich man's gate. His soul was as humble, as his estate was low, or his body afflicted. He envied not the rich Man's plenteous and glorious condition, nor longed for his sumptuous fare, nor was ambitious to be set at his Table. We hear not from him the least murmuring at God's Providence, nor any complaining of hard measure, in that God had not provided as plentifully for him, as for worse men. He was not of the Temper of those sturdy and stomachful Vagrants too common amongst us, to the reproach of any Government, wherein they are suffer'd; who swear, and curse, and rail at all who do not give them whatsoever they crave. He neither hates the rich man, nor wisheth him the least hurt, no Passion ariseth in his heart against him, nor doth an angry word proceed out of his Mouth. All that he desired was no more, but to have some share of those crumbs to allwage his present Hunger, which were ordinarily thrown to the rich man's dogs.

Let all poor People imitate Lazarus in these things. Let them see that they be truly pious, and serve God faithfully in their low estate. Let them labour to be rich in faith, and the genuine Children of faithful Abraham, who at God's call, left all to follow him, as did the holy Apostles of Christ, and as our blessed Jesus hath commanded all Men to be ready to do. Let them trust to God's promises made unto the Godly poor, and in sincere piety wait patiently and contentedly.

contentedly for the blessed Inheritance of the Children of God, *reckoning*, that the *sufferings* of this present time, are not *worthy* to be compared with the *glory* that shall be revealed in them. Rom. 8. 18. Let them *hunger* and *thirst* after Righteousness, in hope of the *blessedness* belonging to them that do so, for they shall be filled. Mat. 5. 6. Whatever else they want, let them be clothed with *humility*, and *humble* themselves under the mighty Hand of God, that he may exalt them in due time. 1. Pet. 5. 5. 6. Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for their's is the Kingdom of Heaven. Mat. 5. 3.

Whatever our condition be in this World, whether we be *rich* or *poor*, *high* or *low*, *healthy* or *sickly*, let us always remember, that it is the condition which our *wise* and *gracious* God hath *chosen* for us. And therefore it becomes us to be *contented* with it, and *cheerfully* to acquiesce in it, so long as it pleaseth him to continue it. If we be *rich* and *healthy*, we are so much the greater Debtors to God, for so much undeserv'd goodness. And if we be *poor*, or *sick*, *sore* or *maimed*, we know that we have deserved far worse things than these, and have abundant cause to bless God, that it is no worse with us. Let us remember, that God is the LORD and Owner, the free *Disposer* and *Giver* of all things, and we have no right to any thing, nor so much as to life it self, and therefore ought to be well contented, and very thankful in whatsoever state we are. Whatsoever it is, better or worse, it behoves us to make the best we can of it, and so to improve it, that we may be eternally the better for it. We are all of us, as long as we live, in a state of *Trial*; we are *Provisioners* for another World, and there is no condition

dition we can here be in, *good* or *bad*, but it may be improv'd to the encrease of our future and eternal *Happiness*; and again, it may be so abused, as to encrease our future and eternal *misery*. Our present condition may be very changeable and various, as it pleaseth God; sometimes better, sometimes worse, and the *Prince and Begger* may in a little time be made to change places; whatever it be, it shall very shortly change for one that will be for ever *unchangeable*. And yet, howsoever our condition changeth, it is our fault, if it do not alway echange for the *better*. If God had made *Riches* the *best* way to Heaven, it would have concerned us to use all Endeavours to become rich, and to keep our selves so. And if God had made *Poverty* the *only* or *best* way to Heaven, we should have been as much concern'd to keep our selves *poor*. But it is neither the one, nor the other, that we are to account either the *only*, or the *best* way. It is indifferent, which it is that God chuseth for us, so that he give us also grace to behave our selves well in the way wherein he hath set us. We must quickly be at the end of our Journey, and out of this World, and we are no sooner out of it, but we are in another, and in a condition there, which will be *one* and the *same* for ever. It ought therefore to be very indifferent to us now, which *way* we are to go, through *Riches* or through *poverty*, *prosperity*, or *adversity*; seeing either way we may come as well to our Journeys end, if we order our goings by the Law of God. Let us not therefore be solicitous about the way, or what our state and condition may be in this World, wherein we are but *Pilgrims* and *Strangers*; but let it be our care to go on *up-*
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rightly

rightly, and *apace* in the way wherein God hath set us. Are we in any measure *rich* and *healshful*? So let us use our *Wealth* and *Health*, that we *may be the happier hereafter*, for the *Wealth* and *Health* we have *here* enjoyed: For so we may be, if we do as much 'good with both as we can'; and if we do not so, they will make us more miserable for ever. Are we *poor*, *weak*, or *sickly*? Let us so behave ourselves, that we may be hereafter so much the *happier* for having been in such a condition; and so we shall be, if we now bear our wants and sufferings as we ought; and if we do not so, we shall be the more miserable *for ever*, for having been miserable *once*. In short, let us live *soberly*, *piously*, and *godly*, and whatever our outward state now is, we shall find in the end, that it was the *best* for us.

There is yet one thing more, that may deserve to be taken notice of, in the description of these two Persons, in this *Parable*. And it is this, That the one of them is here called by his proper *Name*, but the other is not. Our blessed *Saviour* speaking of the *poor Man*, saith, *There was a certain Begger named LAZARUS*, but of the *rich Man* he saith no more but this, *There was a certain rich Man*, what his *Name* was, he tells us not. What the Reason is, why the one is here expressed by *Name*, and the other not; or what was our blessed *Saviour's* design hereby to teach us, I dare not confidently affirm; nor am I willing to lay any more weight on the *Words* and *phrases* used in *Parables*, than I think they will bear. And yet nothing hinders, but that we may by any *words* we read in the Holy Scripture be put in mind of something, which tho' it was not, perhaps, any part of the *Speaker's Intention*, may

may yet to the *Reader* or *Heaver* be an *occasion* of a *seasonable* and *useful Meditation*.

Many Persons are very ambitious of a *Name* in the *World*, yea, and to leave a *Name* behind them, when they go out of the *World* too. And truly if it be a *Good Name* they affect, and if they aspire unto it by *vertuous actions* only, which are the only solid Foundations whereon real *Honour* and *Renown* can stand, it ought not to be called *Vain-glory*, but is to be esteemed a branch of that *Magnanimity*, or greatness of *Soul*, which excellently well becometh every *Christian*. *A good Name is better than precious Ointment*. Eccl. 7. 1. *The Testimony of one's Conscience*; that his life hath been truly *vertuous*, and for that *Laudable*, is more *sweet* and *refreshing*, more *pleasant* and *delightful* to a good Man, than all the most delicious and costly *Ointments* and *Perfumes* can be to the *voluptuous Epicure*; yea, the *fame* of such an one as hath lived to *do good* all the days of his life, reviveth *dying vertue* in those who shall hear of him, when he is to be no more seen. The *sweet Savour* he hath left behind him, renders his *Memory* blessed to late *Posterity*, and tho' he be dead, the good *Example* he hath set surviveth, and teacheth them that come after him, how they are to follow him unto real and everlasting *Glory*. *A good Name therefore is rather to be chosen then great Riches*. Prov. 22. 1. Had the *rich Man* here made his choice, his *Name* might possibly have been transmitted to us by our *Saviour*, as well as that of the *Beggar*. But this *rich Gentleman*, as too many do, desiring rather to be *rich* than *virtuous*, and to have a *great Name* in the *World*, rather than a *good one*; is not thought worthy by our *Saviour* of a *Name*, how

considerable soever he might seem to himself, and to others like himself, yet the holy JESUS mentions him with *Contempt*, as a *mean despicable Fellow*; a *certain rich Man*, that's all the Title of Honour or Respect he thought fit to bestow upon him.

That which is highly esteemed amongst Men, is a-bomination in the sight of God. Luk. 16. 16. This *rich man* we are to suppose to be one of those, who are wont to be had in great Honour, and to be cringed to by their poorer Neighbours, and especially by them who have any dependance upon them, such as their *Servants* and *Tenants*. Let a Man be *rich*, it's no matter by what base Arts he became so, he is forthwith a *Gentleman* at least, and it will be hard to keep him from being a *Nobleman* too. For what should hinder him from rising to what height he pleaseth, who is born up with *golden Wings*? Like *Nebuchadnezzar's* golden Image, he will be sure to have *Worship* enough, if not for *love*, yet for *fear*, tho' he be a very *Idol*, and can have no *Sense* of *real worth* and *goodness*, yet may he *fall* upon, and by his weight *crush* those to Death, that observe not their *distance*. However, if he be *rich*, he is to be sure a Man of *Name* in the Neighbourhood, every one knoweth him by it, and seldom mentioneth it without some *addition*. Whilst the *poor Man*, how deserving soever, is known by few, and usually, if not, as *Solomon* saith, *bated*, yet despised of his Neighbour. *Prov. 14. 20.* Almost no body takes notice of him, and the most are asham'd to seem acquainted with him, as one who is thought fitter Company for Dogs than Men. And truly it was a greater Honour to poor *Lazarus* to lie with the Dogs at the

rich

rich Man's Gate, than it would have been to sit at the *Table* with that *Swine* their *Master*.

Here is the pious *poor man's* both *comfort* and *honour*, that the wise *Judge* of all Men thinks his *Name* worthy to be register'd in his own *Book*, he takes care *the Righteous*, how obscure and despicable soever he be among Men, shall be *had in everlasting remembrance*. He would have the *World* to take notice, That *them* that honour God, God will honour, and they that despise him shall be *lightly esteemed*. 1 Sam. 2. 30. He would have the *World* read in poor *Lazarus* his *Name*, the readiness and care of God to *help* and *shew mercy* to the *outcast* and *poor*; that he himself will own them as his *Brethren*, and reckon as done unto himself whatsoever is done unto the least of them, that he will welcome them into *Heaven* as the *blessed Children of his Father*, who-soever they be that pitty them, and shew them kindness, whose *Names* he hath written in the *Book of Life*.

And this one consideration I should think enough to spoil the *rich man's* *faring sumptuously every day*; That how much soever he makes of himself now, and how greatly soever *Fools* now admire him, *Knaves* flatter him, and little *Earthy Souls* do envy him; yet is he all this while of no account or name in the *Judgment of God*; no such *Name* as his is to be found in the *Book of Christ*; nor will his *Purple and fine Linnen* persuade the great *Saviour* of the *World*, to own him as one of his *Family*. A day is coming, and will be upon him when he least, it may be, expects it; when he shall be set on the *left Hand* among the *Goats*, when he shall be driven out from the presence of the great King with a *Depart, I know*

know thee not : When to every good *Lazarus* God will say, as he did to *Moses* and *Israel*. I know thee by Name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. *Exod.* 33. 12. Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy Name, thou art mine. *Isai.* 43. 1. The rich Gentleman, a main part of whose study it was to get a Name among Men, to lade and dawb himself with thick Clay, and boast himself of the multitude of his Riches, whose inward Thought is, that his House shall continue for ever, and his dwelling places to all Generations, and he calls his Lands after his own Name, even this brave Man in Honour (as the Vulgar think him) abideth not, he is like the Beasts that perish. Tho' whilst he lived he blessed his Soul, and Men praised him, whilst he did well to himself: He shall go to the Generation of his Fathers, and shall never see light. He shall carry nothing away, his glory shall not descend after him. In the Generation following his Name shall be blotted out. The memory of the Just is blessed, but the Name of the Wicked shall rot. *Prov.* 10. 7.

LUKE 16. v. 22.

And it came to pass that the Beggar died, and was carried by the Angels into Abraham's bosom, the Rich man also died, and was buried.

HAVING seen what kind of *Persons* these two were, it might be proper enough in the next place to reflect on their *outward state and condition* in this Life, and to consider how consistent it may be with the *Providence* and righteous Government of God, to suffer a *wicked rich Man* to live in the height of *prosperity*, whilst the *poor and righteous Man* that worshipp'd and serv'd him faithfully liv'd, and even *hardly lived* in want of all Earthly Comforts. But because the *Twenty fifth Verse*, when we come to it, will put us upon that Meditation, let us wave it at present, and now only observe.

II. *What kind of departure these two Persons are here said to have had out of this World.* And herein we shall easily discover the truth of what we read, *Pro. 28. 6. Better is the poor that walketh in his Uprightness, than he that is perverse in his Ways tho he be rich.* Indeed they both of them die, but they do not both of them fare alike in Death.

I. The

1. The *first* thing that here we observe is this, That they both of them *die*. *It came to pass, that the Begger died*; and so it came to pass to the *rich man too, he also died*. And thus it shall come to pass to all Mankind, Rich and Poor, Good and Bad, all must *die*. All of us, Noble and Ignoble, how much or how little soever we value our selves on account of our Ancestors, derive our Pedigree from *Adam*; in *him*, what distance soever there is now betwixt the one and the other, the Rich and the Poor meet together, and from him with their *nature* derive *mortalitie*. In *Adam* all *die*. Death spareth not the Rich more than the Poor, nor is the King's Palace, a more *privileged* place on this account, than the Beggar's Clay Cottage. *Death* will arrest even the King himself in his Bed-chamber, in spite of all his Guards. No strong Hold will keep out *Death*, no Splendor, Power or Greatness will affright or amaze it, no Riches bribe it. O what would the *rich and proud Gentleman*, who hath in health as little to give, as he hath much to waste, and can spare nothing from his *Luxury* to bestow either on *God* or the *Poor*; what I say, would not he now, when he sees his *Death* approaching to deprive him of all, willingly give, that he could *buy* and *bestow* away *Death*, as easily, as he used to do the *poor Beggar* from his Door? But here he meets with something as *sturdy* as his himself, and that will bring down his *stout* stomach, and make even the *brave Gentleman* quake for fear. *Death* fears not his high and *surly* looks, nor any of his *high and ranting Words*, nor nor his *frowns, stamps, or Blows*; nor, all his *damning Oaths and Curses*, wherewith he is so richly furnished, and on all occasions is as free of, as he is *sparing* of his
Charity.

Charity. This tall Cedar must down, as well as the lowest Shrub. And as all know this, so it were well, if all too, both *high* and *low*, *rich* and *poor*, *sickly* and *healthful* would, in time rightly consider, and make good use of it. That we would all endeavour to prepare our selves for *Death*, as we may, and as it concerns us to do, before it come. Otherwise it will make a greater difference between one and another, than ever there was, or could be in our *Life-time*.

1. Let the *Rich Man* consider, that he must *certainly die*, and that too, within a very short time; neither he, nor any body else knows how soon. He will possibly say, he doth so, and so do his *Companions* that riot with him in his daily *sumptuous fare*, and therefore they encourage one another in this voluptuous way of *Living*, saying, *Come on, Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we must die. Let us enjoy the good things that are present; and let us speedily use the Creatures like as in Youth. Let us fill our selves with costly Wine and Ointments; and let no Flower of the Spring pass by us. Let us crown our selves with Rose-buds before they be wither'd. Let none of us go without his part of our Voluptuousness; let us leave Tokens of our Foyfulness in every place, for this is our portion, and our Lot is this. Wisd. 11. 8. &c.* This they consider, that *Death* will come quickly, and take all away that is left; and therefore they are resolv'd to leave him nothing, but the bare *Bones* to pick. And truly if this be all their *Portion*, and this their so much boasted of *Wisdom*, I think no good or wise Man hath any reason to envy them for either, whatever cause they may find to pity them.

It is most true indeed, that *Death* will shortly take all away, or rather, take us away from all that we enjoy in this World. And then what's become of all in the World, which we so much admired and doted on? Yea, what's become of that *pleasure* and *delight* which we have taken in *Riches*, or in any thing else that the World afforded us, and what good have we done our selves by feasting on them? If the *Rich* must *die* as well as the *poor*, and so much the *sooner* ordinarily, the *richer* they are, their *Riches* *tempting* and *assisting* them many ways to *shorten* their own *Lives*; and if nothing of all which we have had will *remain* to us when we are *dead*, no not so much as a *pleasing Sense* of our *past Enjoyments*; then let this teach us.

First, not to weary our selves in seeking and scraping up *Riches*, as if we should never *die*, but live here for ever to enjoy them. How foolish a thing is it to make so much ado about a thing that is of so *short continuance*, and of no *longer use* to us than *Riches* will be? We must all *die* within a *few Years*, what then should we do with *Goods* laid up for *many Years*? *This Night* our *Souls* may be called away out of our *Bodies*, and then *whose* shall these things be which we have been all our *Life time* providing? Yea, so busy are we in providing for we know not *whom*, that we *our selves* cannot get *time to live*; we are onely *providing* for *Life*, till it be at an *end*, and all our *Provision* is to no purpose. Shall we *live* again after *Death*, or not? If not, 'tis certain we can enjoy nothing of all that we have so long labour'd for: If we shall, yet the *Life* we must then live, will be such, as will have no need, neither can make any use of all the *Stores* we have laid in;
If

If we shall live no more, one wou'd think we shou'd be concern'd to make this *short Life* as *pleasant* and *sweet* to us as we can, seeing we cannot lengthen it as we would, and not *imbitter* it, and render it *worse* than *death* to us by *anxious cares*, and *toilſom drudgings*. And if we shall live again, certainly we are very *Fools*, if we concern not our selves as much for that *future* as for this *present Life*; especially seeing that will be *everlasting*, and this but for a *moment*; and yet *this* but the *Seed time*, and that the *Harvest*. Why are we not then *providing Bags* which wax not *old*? Why are we not *laying up* for our selves *Treasures in Heaven*? Why are we not *seeking first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness*? This, if we did, and made it, as we ought, the principal care and business of this *present Life*, we might labour with *ease*, and rejoice in our *Labours* for the *Things* of this *World*, and whilst our *Hands* are at their *necessary* and *honest Work*, we might set our *Hearts* at rest; not doubting, but all these *Things* we labour for, *And our Heavenly Father knows that we stand in need of*, shall be added unto us, in such a *measure*, as is most expedient for us. A *very little* is enough for a *very short Life*; and a *seasonable preparation* for that other *Life*, which will need none of these things will make that *little* very comfortable.

Secondly, Let us wisely husband that stock of *Wealth*, which God hath bestow'd upon us, whether it be *more* or *less*, in this *Life*; so as that if it be possible we may reap some benefit by it in the *Life to come*. We must quickly die, how rich soever we be; and tho' when we live again, these *Things* we now have, shall be no more, any way serviceable to us; yet the use we now make

make of them will. We shall reflect upon it with joy and comfort, and receive an ample Reward for it. Let us now make our selves Friends of this unrighteous or deceitful Mammon, that when we fail, and can live no longer in this transitory World, they may receive us into everlasting Habitations. Feed the Hungry, cloath the Naked, relieve the Poor; let all we have be seasonably laid out, and disposed of wisely in works of necessity, piety and charity; and hereby we shall hoard up abundance, and our Wealth will so encrease upon us, that death itself cannot consume it, but we shall continue rich to all eternity. Is not this a better way of improving our Wealth to our own advantage, than to feed and cram our Bodies to Death with it, and by satisfying our Lusts, to prepare fuel for Hell-fire with it, or to lay it up for the rust or the moth to eat, or for Thieves to steal, or a prodigal Son to waste, and destroy himself with it?

Thirdly, Let us therefore so forecast and order all our affairs in time, that Death, how soon soever it comes, may not be able to rob us of any thing, or so much as to affright us. That tho' we must of necessity leave all our wealth behind us, yet we can lose nothing by dying. Tho' we have Wealth, let us be sure not to love. Let us be sure to love God, our own Souls, and our Neighbours, our Religion, and our Country; and let every one of these have a full share of whatever we have; and then we are sure, that all we have is safe. Let us therefore make haste, and thus dispose of all our riches, and be sure to banish them quite from our Hearts before Death surprize us. How terrible else will Death appear to us, and what mischief will it do us, when it will carry away

away all, and yet cannot come by it without breaking our Hearts to get it. O Death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a Man, that liveth at rest in his possessions, unto the man that hath nothing to vex him, and that hath prosperity in all things? Ecc. xli. 7. Our Chests, our Tables, our rich Apparel, stately House, and brave and glistering Furniture, and whatever we most dearly loved we must see no more; our tender and delicate Bodies must be fed upon by Worms, and our famished Souls go to make the Devils merry, if they can be so with their torments. Is it not our wisdom to prevent all this now we may by a right disposing of all our Wealth, as God directs us? Let us then empty our Hearts of them; how full soever be our Chests or our Purses: Yea, let us make hast to empty these too, and put all our Treasure into safe hands: for shortly we must die, whatever arts and shifts we now use to keep off Death, or to get rid of the troublesome thoughts of it. We have no way to secure ourselves from being hurt by it, but by dying to our Wealth beforehand, and making Piety and Charity, and the necessities of Nature, and of our Relations, our Executors of all.

2. Let the Poor man also consider that he must die. Death pitieth the Poor no more than it feareth the rich. As it cannot be bribed by the one, so neither can it be intreated by the other. The Beggars mournful tone and lamentable note, the shewing of his rags or his sores, can here move no more to forbearance, than they could do the rich and proud charit to compassion. Let the Poor consider this well, and make a right use of it.

First, Let us, if we be Poor in this Worlds goods, labour to be rich in Grace and Goodness. This, and this alone can arm either the rich or poor against the

the *sting* of Death. The *sting* of Death is sin, 1 Cor. xv. Let not Sin have dominion over us, let it not reign in our Bodies, so that we obey it in the Lusts thereof; and Death brings nothing along with it, wherewith it can hurt us. Let us therefore make hast thus to disarm Death, by repenting of all our Sins, and doing good as long as we Live; and live we never so poorly now, we shall be sure after Death to live gloriously for ever.

Secondly, if we be poor and lame, sore or sickly, let us comfort ourselves with this, that we shall not be long so, for we must shortly die; and therefore none of the evils which we now endure, can last any long time. Let us not, whatever else we want, want patience too; and the rather because we are sure we shall but a very little while stand in need of it, and yet without it this little while will seem very long to us. This advantage we have of the rich, that Death, how soon soever it comes, can deprive us of nothing but a miserable Life, and that's a thing no man can be very fond of. As Death puts an end to all the rich Mans Joys; so doth it also put an end to all the poor Mans Troubles and Sorrows, and can it be thought a killing thing to part with these? O Death, acceptable is thy Sentence unto the needy, and unto him whose strength faileth, that is now in the last Age, and is vexed with all things. Eccclus. xli. 2. O how sweetly may a pious poor Man, whose only care it has been to serve God, and whose only comfort to trust in him, depart out of this tiresome Life, to receive his reward in Life Everlasting? He never tasted any thing in this World, wherein he could find any great sweetness or pleasure; he hath no worldly delights or lusts clinging to him, and holding him fast; so that he needs struggle
hard

hard to get away out of this World. He hath ever been a *stranger* to all the *rich Mans Joys*, and hath found little else but *ill usage*, and a very *course entertainment* in this Life, and therefore what a *joyful* hour must that be to him, wherein *Death* comes to call him home to his *Fathers House*, there to *feast* himself with *Angels*, and to wear in the *Kingdom of God* a glorious *Crown of Righteousness*? Let all that are *poor* take heed how they lose this great advantage, by living *wickedly*, by *replining* at their poor condition, by *envying* the rich and prosperous Sinner, or by *impudently* longing to be in his place.

Lastly, let us all, whatever our present condition, in this World be, remember that we are in a condition wherein we cannot be *long*. And therefore let it be our great care, that our *behaviour* be always such, so long as we live here, that our condition may not be *worse*, but *better* for our *dying*. Let us use all diligence, to order all things so, that whensoever we shall *die*, we may *die comfortably* well *satisfied* with *Life*, and not *afraid* of *Death*; having a well grounded hope, that we shall not *die eternally*.

2. A *Second* thing which we may observe in the *Death* of these two Persons is this. It so came to pass, it being thus ordered by the *Divine Providence*, that *Lazarus* the *Beggar* died *first*, and the *Rich Man* afterward, having some time, it is not said how long, *survived* the other.

Indeed it cannot seem strange at all, That a *poor diseased Beggar*, that wanted all the comforts of *Life*, having neither *Salves* for his *Sores*, nor *wholesome Food* for his *nourishment*, nor *Cloaths*

to keep him warm, should die before a *rich Gentleman* that had all things needful to Life in great abundance; and how little soever he set by others, would be sure to make much of *himself* and want nothing that he thought Good for him. However, it doth not always thus come to pass; Nay, very often we see it otherwise. Many a *poor Man*, that hath nothing at all of his own to Live on, but is fed all his days at other Men's doors, yet liveth to a very great Age; and as many *rich Men*, who fare sumptuously every day as long as they live, die in their youth, and just in the height of all their glory. There are but few, whose *poverty* occasioneth their *early dying*; for one such, there is an *hundred* whose *abundance* and *plenty* kills them. Few in any Age can be observed to die of *hunger* and *nakedness*; but many in all Ages may be found dying of *Luxury* and *Intemperance*. The *poor Man* indeed wants the many *helps* and *means* of preserving *Life* and *Wealth*, which the *rich Man* hath; but the *rich Gentleman*, how good and wise soever he would be thought, often wants as much, both *wisdom* and *grace*, to use those means to his own good. Tho the *poor Man* be in more Want than the *rich*, yet stands he for the most part less in need of what he wants; he can live *without* them, and it may be lives the longer because he wants them. If he be *pious* as well as *poor*, he never wants *Gods blessing*, and the *blessing* of the Lord it maketh *rich*, and he ad-herb no sorrow with it. Prov. 10. 22. The *poor Man's poverty* by *God's blessing* is made his *Physick*; and those *Sores*, which fed, and inflamed by the *rich Mans intemperance*, would quickly have become intollerably painful to his *tenderness* and *delicacy*.

licacy and mortal too to his pampered Body, are not only endured with much patience by the poor Man of a more hardened Temper, but serve to prolong Life, and to prevent greater pains by casting forth the remains of his former Sweat and Industry.

If any one shall ask then, why God should deal thus severely with a good and pious Man, that loves and serves him, as to let him live all his days in a calamitous condition, and after that inflict upon him the punishment of Sin, which is Death; letting the rich Glutton all this while, that careth neither for God nor Man, shine in gorgeous apparel, and fare sumptuously every day, and live and laugh to see the poor Man die at his Gate, and be made, it may be, meat for his Dogs for want of a few of those Crumbs which they fed upon? This question will, I hope, be fully answered in this Discourse anon. Now I shall only say, it ought not to seem strange, That God should exercise any of those who love him, and whom he loves, with divers afflictions; which are to all such fatherly chastisements, and as we are taught largely (Heb. 12.) demonstrations of his love and their virtue at once. He knows the temper of all his Children, and keeps every one of them under that kind of Discipline which is most proper for him, and will best fit him for the eternal inheritance, which he hath provided for him. The grace which he hath bestowed upon them, he thus magnifies in the eye of the World, and lets it see how excellent a thing that is, whereby weak Men are able to despise and conquer it, whether it flatter them or frown upon them. Hereby he prepares them for eternal Glory, and every degree of patience and submissiveness in suffering,

ing, assures them, through his mercy and gracious promise ; of a proportionable augmentation of their future blessedness ; and when Death comes, tho' it be a consequent of Sin, yet is it no punishment to them, to whom it can do no more hurt, than to put a desired end to all their Sins and Troubles at once, and to translate them into that blessed State, which they have always longed for, and for which God hath been by their afflictions fitting them. Death is the lot of all Mankind, good and bad, since the fall of Adam, and made by the Second Adam, Jesus Christ, unto all good men, a short and no very uneasy passage into a Life, infinitely better than the most comfortable Life that can be lived in this World. And therefore in this, that the Beggar died before the Rich Man, we may learn thus much.

1. That the more calamitous it pleaseth God to make the Life of good Men in this World, so much the shorter he is often pleased to make it also. He hastens their death, lest their Life should grow tedious, and the long continuance of their afflictions should tire out their patience, He will not suffer them to live without affliction, because he sees it good for them to be afflicted ; and he puts a speedy end to their Afflictions by Death, because he will not have them tempted above that which they are able to bear, but will with the temptation make them a way to escape, tho' it be by Death.—It is a mercy and great favour to make a calamitous Life short also ; and an inestimable favour it is, that this light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory—

2. That shortness of Life is no argument to prove one less beloved of God, than another is who

who survives him, and lives in plenty after he is dead in poverty, God very often *hastens* good Men out of the World, to prevent their being corrupted by it, whilst he suffers many, who every day do more than enough to kill themselves, to live long and healthfully in it. It is well known to all, that *Intemperance*, and especially in *Eating* and *Drinking* is a cause of many foul, painful and dangerous *Diseases*, and is naturally apt to shorten Mens Lives. And yet it pleaseth God by his over-ruling *Providence* very often, so to order it, that *intemperate* Men live longer, and in better *Health*, than they who most strictly observe the Rules of *temperance* and *sobriety*. And this *unthinking* Men are ready enough to plead for themselves, and to encourage themselves by it to hold on in their *debaucheries*; little considering, what will be the end of all at last, or why God suffers them to go on so long in their Sin, and defends their life against themselves, and all their endeavours to destroy it. None that knows what God is, can doubt of it, but that he is much better pleased with them that *love* and *serve* him, than with them that *dishonour* him by disobeying him, and that he delights more in doing them good, than in seeing them miserable. When therefore he calleth *hastily* away by Death them that *love* him, leaving *them* behind that *love* him *not*; all that can be concluded hence is this, that to *die* soon is no hurt to the *good* man, and to *live* longer doth the *wicked* man no good. It is good for the *good* man to die sooner, tho the *wicked* man might in *Justice* be taken away before him; and whenever he dies his Death will do him no good, and so much the less, the longer he is suffered to *live*. God is more forward

in shewing his *goodness* towards them that serve him, than his *severity* to them that dishonour him. The *poor man* that served him faithfully, he in love and mercy releaseth the sooner from his afflictions, and conveys him to joy. And the *rich man* who served not God but his own Belly, he would not shew himself in so much haste to punish eternally. He rather chose to exercise yet more goodness and long suffering towards him, that he might find no colour of excuse for his Sin, or for charging God with severity; who had given him time enough to repent in, and by the poor Mans death a sufficient warning, that it was high time for him to repent.

O! that we would all of us consider this, and especially they who are apt to consider nothing, but how to spend their time most vainly, in leading a riotous and voluptuous Life, and even daily abusing themselves by excess and intemperance of all sorts. What can they hope for, when a few more of their jovial days are gone? Can they eat and drink themselves young again? Will Death be play'd away, or laugh'd out of countenance, as now they play away the thoughts of dying, and laugh at them who mind them of it? They vainly hope, that their present strong and healthful constitution will always bear the load they lay upon it, and stand it out like Walls of Brass against all the Batteries of their luxury and intemperance: they consider not that their Sin doth weaken them, so long as they find themselves strong enough to commit it. If we could but get so much time from sinning, as to think of any thing else, one would think we could hardly miss of some such profitable thoughts as these, viz.

1. That

1. That no *constitution* of Body, how naturally *strong* soever it be, could possibly hold out against all that *violence* which is daily done unto it; did not the *same* mighty Power which made it, constantly *support* and *uphold* it; and how long he will continue to do so, no man knows. We that are continually *warring* against both his *Commands*, and our own *Life* and *Health*, have little cause to hope he should always *defend* us against *ourselves*. Certain it is, that the *mud walls* of these *earthly Tabernacles* our *Bodies*, will in a short time be *dissolved*; and if our own *lusts* pull them not down very *speedily*, it is only because He that made them, is pleased, for what end he knows to repair them daily for us.

2. That they who are most confident of their *strength*, that are *mighty to pour in strong drink*— and to execute all the *Commands* of all their *Lusts* with much *vigour* and *alacrity*; and say to themselves, *they shall never be moved*—Come ye, I will fetch *Wine*, and we will fill our selves with *strong Drink*, and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant. *Isai. lvi. 12.* Even these *daring men* do sometimes find the *strongest Constitution* broken in a *moment*, when they least think of it; yea, so suddenly, as to give them no time to think of it; and one single *act* of *intemperance*, like the *last stroke* of an *axe*, brings down the *stout Oak*, which would hardly so much as *shake*, by the *many blows* had been before given it. *Strong Men*, who have held out *bravely* (as they account it) against their own *madness* for many years, and found no sensible *decay* in themselves, have by *one day's folly* be laid in the dust.

3. That

3. That every *escape* we have had from the violent assaults of our own *Lusts*, should make us more *cautious* for the time to come; and very *jealous* that they design us no good. Every *Surfait* or *Fever* that our *intemperance* brings upon us, should warn us to stand upon our *Guard*, and to take heed of *another*, lest it kill us. The burnt *Child* dreads the *Fire*, and he that hath made a narrow *escape* from the effect of his *Sin* and *Folly*, is worse than a *Child* if he be too *daring* again. If I have risen again after a *fall* through *drunkenness* from my *Horse*, I am more a *brute* than he, if I venture on another. By this *fall* I came to the *ground*, or it may be into a *pit*, lay *astonish'd* for a while, or however but *little hurt*; yet I got up, came to my self, and am well again; but by the *next* *Fall* I may go down to *Hell*, and feel the *torment* of it for ever. As often as I have *escaped* out of any *Evil* or *Danger* my *intemperance* had brought me into, so often hath *God* *warned* me to leave my *Sin*, and told me, that his *goodness* and *long-suffering* should lead me to *repentance*, that I may be *saved*.

4. That if such *escapes* be no *warnings* to us, but we will hold on in our *intemperate* course of *Life*; tho' we *live*, and live in *Health*, and out-live many *temperate* and *sober* Persons, yet we live to very *ill purpose*, and it had been better for us, that we had *died* many years ago. By making use of our *strength* to *Sin* the more *boldly*, we make a long *Life* a long time of *fixing* ourselves for *eternal misery*; and by the *hardness* of our *impetuous* *Hearts*, treasure up unto ourselves *wrath* against the day of *wrath*, and *revelation* of the righteous *judgment* of *God*. Rom. II.

Let us all, *rich and poor, sick or well*, remember this; That who *dies first* it is not much material, but who *dies best*; and that he is sure to do that *lives best*; and he *lives best*, that *lives not after the flesh*, fulfilling the Lusts thereof, for he shall die eternally; but he that by the Spirit mortifies the deeds of the body, for he shall live for ever. Rom. viii. Die we all must, and after Death will be the judgment. Hebr. 3. That's it we should labour to be prepared for, and that's to be the business of this present Life. Let us therefore cease, either to plead foolishly against, whilst we think we are pleading for ourselves; saying, many temperate Persons are *sickly* all their lives, and die very young; and we who are *intemperate* have lived to old age and in health: or secondly to censure and judge rashly of those whom God is pleased early to remove out of this World by Death, and in the mean time to continue in an afflicted condition, as if they were wicked Persons; and such for whom God had no kindness: Or, Lastly, to abuse God's patience and long-suffering towards ourselves, and to tempt God, as if we had a mind to try, whether the strength of our natural temper or constitution, or his patience will hold out the longer.

Both these Persons died, as we must all very shortly do. And the poor Man died before the rich Man; yet know not we, which of us, be we poor, or be we rich, shall die first. Happy, however was the poor man, being a pious man too, that he died so soon. No doubt of it but he had St Paul's wish, who desired to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better, for every good man to live here. Phil. ——— To a poor man, what is there in Life that is desirable? If he be contented to live as long as it pleaseth God, it

is all that can be expected from him. And to a *pious Man* what can be terrible in *Death*? He knows that *Death* cannot hinder him from being with his blessed *Saviour* in everlasting joy. If a *pious poor Man* be in want both of *Wealth* and *Health* in this *World*, he knows that he shall have all that he stands in need of after *Death*; and therefore *Death* is welcom to him, seeing it comes, only to call him from want and need, to plenty and fulness. *Blessed are they that hunger now, for they shall be filled*—

3. We are now come to the *third thing* observable in the *death* of these two Persons. Of dead *Lazarus* it is said, *That he was carried by the Angels into Abraham's bosom*. Of the *rich Man* no more is here said, but that *he was buried*, or carried (it is not said by whom) to his *Grave*. Whither he went after that we shall see in the next verse. Now here is something very Remarkable in this Passage.

Our blessed *Saviour* telling us whither it was that the *Beggar* was carried when he died, speaketh of his *Soul* only, for it was that only which the *Angels* carried into *Abraham's Bosom*: and he takes no notice at all of his *Body*, to tell us what became of that. But speaking of the *rich Man*, he tells us nothing at all here of his *Soul*, but speaks of his *Body* only, for it was the *Body* only that was buried, whatever became in the mean time of his *Soul*. And yet, tho' his Words can only signify *one part* of the *Man*, he so speaks of that *one part*, as if it were the *whole Man*. For tho' the *Soul* only of the *Beggar* was carried into *Abraham's Bosom*, yet he saith, the *Beggar* was carried thither; and tho' it was the *Body* only of the *rich Man* that was buried, yet he saith the *rich Man*

Man was Buried. And hence it may not improbably be conjectured; as of olden times new

First, That seeing the burying of the poor Man's body is not at all mentioned, as the rich Man's is, that either he had no burial, no Man had so much humanity (at least not the rich Man) as to see his Body interr'd; or else if he had any Burial, it was but a very humble and obscure one. It may be he was either removed a little out of the way, and cast into some place, where the Dogs that licked his sores when alive, might eat up his flesh being dead; or else some of the rich Man's Servants might, instead of giving him a decent Burial, throw him into some Hole or Ditch.

Whatever became of his Body, whether it was Buried according to the usual Custom or no; yet we may do well to consider thus much. That tho' it very well becomes our surviving Friends, both to signify their own humanity and affection towards us, and to testify their faith and hope of a Resurrection of the Body from the dead; to see our Bodies in a decent manner, and not without some Religious Rites, committed to the ground; yet good Men will not be very solicitous about this matter, that is, they will not be very much concerned, what shall become of their Bodies when they are dead. As the Body is but the *lesser part* of a pious Man's care whilst he liveth; his chief study and business being to provide well for his Soul; and for the Body no farther, than to keep it a pure and cleanly habitation, and a fit instrument of the Soul during this natural life. So when he is about to die, it is much less his care, as a thing now growing; as now it is useful to his Soul; and all that he can with any earnestness desire is, that it may in some decent manner, as
be.

becomes the *Body* of a *Christian*, be put out of the way, and not lie so, as to be offensive to his Friends, or any other. Where-ever it shall be laid, he knows it will be in the hand of God; and he will take care to restore it again to him a *glorious Body* in his own due time.

Secondly, 'Tis probable, that the *rich Man* had (as such men usually take too much care to have) a very *sumptuous* and *costly Funeral*. Our *Saviour* here saith no more, but that he *was buried*; yet having said how *Lazarus* was carried by the *Angels* into *Abraham's Bosom*, why may we not also understand by the *rich Mans* being *Buried*, his being carried in great state by Persons of some Note, with much Solemnity unto some costly Sepulchre which was provided for him? Thus much I say may seem intimated in this; that our *Saviour* not only saith, that the *rich Man* also died, but addeth these Words, *and was Buried*; that is, I suppose he was buried as such rich men used to be, with a great deal of solemn ceremony. And this, if it was so, may well set forth unto us the great vanity of this *rich Epicure*. Indeed, it is usual with such *Gentlemen* as he, seeing their *lives* afforded nothing to commend them for, and fearing their *trencher-friends* and *pot-companions* will then fail them; who flattered them so much whilst they lived, and could feed them, that they have no flattery to spare for their *names*, after Death hath left them nothing but the hungry remembrance of their old good Fare to feed on; to take a great deal of care to be buried as *sumptuously* as they lived; and that their *rotting Bodies* may wear as *costly Attire*, as they used to do *Cloaths* when *alive*. Yea, it is now become the almost universal vanity of the World,

and

and more especially of those in it, who have most solemnly renounced it, with all the pomps and vanities of it, to take all the care they can that they shall not all go quite out of it when they die; that their dust, at least, may be laid up here in *stone*; and that, if possible, it may never be forgotten where it was laid; but when it is mixed and blended with the earth wherein it was laid, that the one can no longer be distinguished from the other; yet a Stone laid upon it may inform those that come after that *there* it is. Something must be done to keep us alive one way or other in *this world* when we are gone out of it; we think not Heaven deserving of us *wholly*; a name at least upon a Grave Stone shall acquaint the World how well we loved it. As much cost is too often by the last Will and Testament bestowed on a *sensual's* Carcase, as would plentifully maintain such an one as poor Lazarus his whole Life time. One would think, that Churches, Schools and Hospitals, well endowed for the maintenance of Religion, Learning and the Poor, should be the most creditable and durable Monuments for the Rich; and for others, who have less to leave behind them (they most make it appear by this *vanity* that they have too much) the bellies and backs of the poor well fed and cloathed, and children well educated, would far better preserve a remembrance of them, than a *tight and flattering Funeral Sermon*, or a heavy Gravestone.

Thirdly, That the Soul of every good Man is his principal care both so long as he lives in Health, and when he is a dying. *This* is it, which he looks upon as Himself, and what becomes of his Body he cannot be much concerned, whilst his

feels

feels his *Soul* in Health, and perceives it now about to be translated by Death into a State, wherein it will be past all danger of *dying* or *suffering* any evil thing. Therefore, I suppose, our Blessed Saviour speaks of *Lazarus* his *Soul*, as if it were the whole of him. If *Lazarus* his *Soul* be carried into *Abraham's Bosom*, then is *Lazarus* carried thither. The *Body* will in due time follow the *Soul*, whither soever it goes, *Death* cannot part these two for ever. Let us therefore take care of our *Souls*, and we take care enough of our selves; if the Jewel be safe, it shall not always want a Case or Cabinet. On the contrary,

Fourthly, The *Body* of a *Worldly* and *Carnal* *Epicure* is all his care; and thence may our Blessed Saviour be thought to speak of it, as if it were the whole of the rich Man, because it is too often all that such an one accounts himself, or hath any, either love or sense of. If the *Body* of the rich Man be Buried, then is the rich Man Buried. His *Soul* whilst he lives was, tho' not in its Nature, yet in its affections, as *Earthly* as his *Body*; and therefore may it be with good sense said of him all when he is Buried, *Earth to Earth*. What is it that the brave Gentleman now regards, or labours in every thing to please, but an *Earthly Body*? This he Feasts, and this he Recreates, this he Dawbs and Gilds, and this he would have Adored, Cringed and Bowed to, and this he would have advanced to rule the World if he could. But alas, these *Bodies* of ours, how gay and gawdy things soever we now make them, will shortly fall down into Corruption and Nottenness, and all their Glory be hid in a dark and

and dirty hole. They that make so much of their *Bodies* now, as if they were nothing else but *Body*, will quickly feel to their sorrow, that they have *Souls* too, which when their beloved *Bodies*, much against their Wills, shall die, tho' fain they would have *them* die too, can never die. These can find no rest with their *Bodies* in the Grave, nor take any pleasure at all, nor find any ease in those rich *Monuments* which cover them. Their *Bodies*, how insensible soever they now lie in the Earth, shall one day follow their *Souls* thither, where no *Bodily* pleasure can be found.

But let us leave a while the *Rich Man* in his Bed of *Dust*, and observe the *poor Beggar's* happy change by Death; that is, from the *Rich man's* Gates, and the Company of his *Dogs*, which was the best Entertainment he could meet with here on Earth; he in Soul is carried by the *Angels* into *Abraham's Bosome*.

First, Whatever became of his *ulcerous body*, and whether any one upon Earth had the Charity for him, to throw a little Earth upon it, or no? His *Soul* immediately upon it's departure out of it, is waited on by a Train of glorious *Angels*; God sends the *Courtiers* of Heaven to conduct it into its resting place, where it is to be lodged in Peace and Comfort, amongst the *Souls* of good Men, till the dawning of the last Day; and the *Angels* come again with its glorious Redeemer, to call it into perfect blessedness, and for ever to be with the Lord.

See here the honour which is done unto the meanest *Servant* of *JESUS Christ*. See I say, and burst with Envy, all you proud and blustering *Gentlemen*, who value more your *Dogs*, than the poor *Christians*, which almost furnish at your
 F Gates,

Gates, and despise your drudging Tenants, as tho' they were made for no other end than to be your Slaves. Whoever honour you now, or whomsoever you are pleased either to honour or to contemn, yet know for certain, That thus it shall be done to every one whom God delights to honour, even as it was here done to poor despised Lazarus. See this, you poor despised Creatures, who wear the Liveries of Christ in your Rags, and Feast on Him in your Hunger; thus shall every pious Soul, how poorly soever he now live, and how weakly soever he now crawl, and how despicable soever he is now to the Rich Man, be honour'd of God when he dies. The great and glorious King of Kings owns you for his beloved Children, whom the Rich Men now use worse, than they do their Dogs. Every one of you, that hath by Faith received Christ, to him hath he given power, even the inestimable Privilege and Dignity of being one of the Sons of God. Joh. 1. 2. If we be sincere Christians, whatever our present Sufferings be, yet are we all the Children of God by Faith in Christ JESUS. Gal. 3. 26. and if Sons, then Heirs, yea, joint Heirs with Christ. Rom. 8. 17. When God brought the First begotten, even our blessed JESUS into the World, he said, let all the Angels of God worship him. Hebr. 1. And the poorest and most despised of us all, having this Love of the Father for Christ's sake bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God; the same holy Angels that worship the Lord our Saviour, are sent to Minister unto us. Are they not all Ministering Spirits, sent forth to Minister for them who shall be Heirs of Salvation? Heb. 1. They that scorn us now so much, as that they would count it a disgrace to them to keep Company with us, or to entertain in their Families any such

such Servants as we are, had they Eyes to see, or Faith to believe, how these heavenly *Spirits*, the choice of *Favourites* of God in the Court of Heaven, with much pleasure and Joy daily *Minister* unto us; would hang down their Heads at the light; yea, and tremble too, could they at the same time behold those *black* and *foul Spirits*, that *haunt* their Houses, and every where accompany them; they could hardly, I am confident, be pleas'd (as now they seem to be with those of another sort) to have such *Blacks* among their Attendants. The *Heavenly Host* of blessed *Spirits* have a charge given them by *their Lord* and *ours*, to watch about us. *He hath given his Angels charge over thee*, whosoever thou art that fearest God, *to keep thee in all thy ways of Righteousness, and to bear thee up in their Hands, lest thou dash thy Foot against a Stone.* Psal. 91. 11. 12. What, tho' Men cast us out like *Carrion* when we die, and hold us not worthy of a winding Sheet, the holy *Angels* of God stand ready to conduct and carry us into the *presence of God*, into the *Kingdom prepared for us from the beginning of the World.* This Honour have all his *Saints*.

Secondly, These *Angels* carry *Lazarus* into *Abraham's Bosom*. And that we may be very sure of it, is a place of *Ease, Comfort, Safety and Honour*. What is meant by *Abraham's Bosom* is not very hard to conceive, when we understand, That the *Jews* were wont to use this phrase of *being in Abraham's bosom*, whensoever they would signify one to be in *great Happiness*. *Abraham* was the great Exemplar to the World of a very wonderful *Faith* in God; leaving cheerfully all his visible *Earthly Enjoyments*, and hopes, to obey the *Call of God*; tho' he knew not (as the *Apo-*

the faith) *whither he went*. He trusted God with all, never fearing to be a loser by it. Therefore is he called the *Father of all them that believe*. And all they that imitate him in his *Faith*, are called the *Children of faithful Abraham*.

Now tender Parents use to express their love to their Children, by laying them in their *Bosomes*. And they that lie in the *Bosome* of loving Parents, are no doubt of it as happy, as it is in the power of their Parents to make them. They are sure to fare as well as their Parents do. Now *Abraham* being himself in a very happy state, having *Blessedness* entail'd by God upon himself, and all his faithful Children, when our *Saviour* saith, That *Lazarus* was carried into *Abraham's Bosome*, his meaning must be, that he was lodged among the Faithful Children of *Abraham*, who are all in the same state of *Blessedness*, whatever that be, which he their Father now enjoyeth. It was also a custom at *Feasts* to lie on Beds, so as that the Head of one might lean on the *Bosome* of another; whence *St. John*, the Disciple whom Jesus loved, lying next unto him on the Bed, as they did eat the *Passover*, is said to have *leaned on Jesus his Bosome*, Joh. 13. 28. Now the Joys of Heaven being compared to a Feast, they that go to Heaven, are said to *sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven*. Mat. 8. 11. when therefore our blessed *Saviour* saith, that the *Beggar* was carried into *Abraham's Bosome*, his meaning is, that he was entertain'd no worse than *Abraham* was, but *feasted together* with him. *Abraham* is noted in his *History* for his great *Hospitality*, and liberal Entertainment of *Strangers* and *poor Travellers*, and therefore is the

poor Man's happiness after death, most patly expressed by his lying in the *Bosome* of one as famous for his *Charity*, as for his *Faith*. However, he wanted the *Temporal Blessings* of *Abraham*, whilst he lay at the rich Man's Gate, he should now have the *eternal and Spiritual Blessings* of *Abraham*, as one of his *spiritual Seeds* communicated freely to him lying in his *Bosome*.

This is spoken to the great *Honour* of faithful *Abraham*, that they who are happiest after death are said to lie in *his Bosome*. Let us all therefore endeavour to be as like *Abraham* as we can upon Earth, that we may be like him too in another World.

Let us all labour to be like him in his *Faith*, being ready to part cheerfully with all Earthly Comforts, whensoever it pleaseth God by his Providence to call us to it. If *Lazarus* had not been contented with his povertie and sores, submitting to God in the worst condition, and trusting him for a better, if not in this, yet in a better World; he had not been carried into *Abraham's Bosome*. Here is the *Trial* of our *Faith*, if we can patiently continue in well doing, what Hardships soever we now lie under, stedfastly trusting that God will make good all his promises to his faithful Servants, tho' our *Reward* come not till after we are dead.

Let us also labour to be like him in his *Charity* and *Hospitality* to the Poor; taking pitty on them, and compassionately with a cheerful Heart, a pleasant Countenance, and a wide Hand liberally relieving to our utmost power the wants of the Needy. Had the *Rich Man* learn'd this good Lesson of relieving the poor, at his Gate plentifully, out of the rich stock and substance which

God had bestowed upon him; had he not spared from the Poor, to feed his Lusts and Dogs; but done good with all, and to all, as he had Opportunity; in faith relying upon God for a gracious Reward, he had been carried when he died into the Bosome of Abraham too.

Again, this is spoken to the great comfort of all pious People, how afflicted soever their present condition be. Let all such therefore as are in any affliction, be sure to keep up their Religion and Piety; hold fast their faith and love; that they may be entertain'd after Death with the Children of faithful Abraham. Let them constantly trust in God, and walk on in the Paths of Righteousness, carefully shunning Stealth, Fraud, Robbery, and every evil way; depending entirely on the promise and providence of God; patiently bearing his Fatherly Chastisements, and with a contented Heart and Thankfulness to God, kindly accepting the relief, how small soever, that they find from any charitable Hand; not doubting, but God will either, when he sees 'tis time, mend their Allowance and Portion here, or remove them hence into Abraham's Bosome, a quiet, plentiful, and honourable State, which by Death they shall go into.

Thus have we considered the Life and Death of these two Persons, how it fared with each of them afterwards, we shall be inform'd in the following Verses.

LUKE

God

LUKE 16. v. 23.

And in Hell he lift up his Eyes, being in Torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his Bosome.

III. **W**E are now to see in what Condition these two Persons, the *Rich Man* and the *Beggar* were, immediately after their Death. And this we may understand in some good measure from what is told us of them in this *Vers*; and more we shall discover in those which follow. Something hath been taught us already of the comfortable state of the *poor Man*; and here are we taught something of the miserable state of the *Rich Man*. And the Things which we are expressly taught of it, are these three.

1. That immediately after his Death he was in Hell.

2. That being in Hell, he was there in Torments.

3. That in Torments, he beheld Abraham and Lazarus in his Bosome. And these three Things do all of them deserve our serious Consideration.

1. So soon as the *Rich Man* died, he was in Hell. The *Rich Man* (saith our Saviour) also died, and was buried; and being in Hell, he lift up his Eyes, being in Torments. Nothing comes betwixt his Death and Burial, and his Torments in Hell. But before we consider this any farther, let us observe something from the whole Verse,

of universal Concernments to be well Learn'd, and firmly believ'd, and it is this.

When Men *die*, or *depart* out of this World by *Death*, whether they be *good* or *bad*, their *Souls die not*; but continue still *alive*, and pass into another *State*, wherein they are *sensible* of Good and Evil. The *Rich Man's Soul* after *Death* is said to be in *Torments*, and we shall afterwards find, that he was *sensible* of his *Torments*, or indeed they were no *Torments*. He was *sensible* of the condition of *Abraham* also, and *Lazarus*, as well as of his *own*; and that *Lazarus* his *Soul* was in *Abraham's Bosom* is plain, and that he was there in *joy* and *comfort* is as plain, from what is said of *him* afterwards. And hence we conclude against our *Somatists*, that Men are not only *Bodies*, or mere *Machines*, Things that consist of nothing else but *Matter* put into *motion*; and also against another *Set*, that our *Souls sleep not* after *Death*, or lie in an *insensible* condition till the *Resurrection*. And this helps us to understand our own *Nature*, what we are; and also confirms our *Faith*, touching the *Immortality* of our *Souls*, which are such Things as shall not *die*, but in one state or other *live for ever*.

Some Men are grown so quite out of love with *Holiness*, and all manner of *Goodness*; and are fallen so deeply in love with *Sin* and *Impurity*; and are so extremely fond of their *Bodies*, and mad to fulfil all the *Lusts* of the *Flesh*; that for the sake of their *Sins*, they are quite *alienated* from their own *Nature*, and cannot endure to think any longer that they are *Men*, or that they have any such Things in their *Bodies* as *rational Souls*. And indeed, it is no great wonder, that *they*, who are busy, continually to spoil the *Work* of
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God in themselves, and have made themselves such deform'd Creatures; should (to conceal their own folly and madness herein) be willing to have all Men believe, that God never made any Man more beautiful, perfect and lovely than themselves now are. We are told, and it cannot be hard to believe it, of such Men as these, that they are Men walking after their own Lusts, and glorying in their Shame. And it is for their Lusts sake, and for the delight they have in those carnal pleasures, which God hath forbidden; that they in the first place fall out with God himself, and would make all the World, if they could, believe, that there is no such Being as God is. Hence they set all their Wits on Work; to contrive by what means they may persuade Men to think it a Thing not impossible, that this World might be such as it is without a God; and if they can but bring them to believe so much, they will hope by degrees to bring them to a Belief, of what they suppose all Men would be as well content to have true, as they are; to wit, that there is no God, for then might they sin merrily, without all fear of being call'd to any account for it; which, if there be a God, they cannot do; God having, as their own reason tells them he must, given them Laws to live by, and told them, that he will reward the Keepers, and punish the Breakers of his Laws. Now if they find either their own, or other Men's Reason too strong for them in this point; and if they find it too hard a Thing to be believ'd, that all Things can be as they are, and have long been, without some One Being of so great Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, as to make them what they are, and so cannot prevail with Men to be down right Atheists; they will yet try one Experiment more

more in favour of their *Lasts*, and do all they can to make them *Deists*; who granting the *Name of God* due to *Something*, they know not well what, suppose themselves to be indeed very *fine pieces of Workmanship*; not wisely designed or contriv'd by a *voluntary free Agent*, take heed of that; but either by the *necessary Operation of natural Causes*, eternally working by a constant and immutable Law: or by some *lucky hit and chance*, no Body knows how; any thing you imagine possible shall be allowed of, so you do not hold Man to be the work of one that governs him by *Moral Laws*; or to have a *Spirit* within him capable of understanding the *goodness of those Laws*; and of governing the Man by them. If they cannot rid the World of God the *Maker and Governor* of it some way or other, they will do their utmost to free Men from such *troublesome things* as their *Souls*, that they so may be incapable of *Moral Government*. For as long as Men are supposed to have *rational Souls*, and such *Souls* are found by all their *Faculties fitted for such Government*, they cannot get rid of those *Laws*, and so *do not live as they list*.

We live in an Age, wherein the World swarms with these *Men and no-Men*, who would be called *Iden*, yea, and thought the only *wise Iden* of the World too; and yet would have it believ'd, they have nothing in them which makes one either a *Man*, or *Wise*. There are but few indeed that are *Philosophers* enough, to reason and dispute much about these Things; but there are *many*, who have *love enough* for their *Sins* to wed them to such *Opinions*, be they right or wrong. Tho' they have not *wit enough* to apprehend either the *strength or weakness* of the

the *Arguments* wherewith they are maintain'd.

We, who have taken upon us in good earnest the profession of *Christian Religion*, are content to be *wise unto Sobriety*; and to submit our selves to be taught of God, rather than by the *World's Wise Men*; who, by their own *Wisdom* know not God, tho' tho' they call us *Fools* for it. We willingly confess, that we have not *Wis* enough to conceive how all Things in the World could come to be what, and as we see them, without a *wise and powerful Maker*, which is God. Neither yet, whilst we feel something in us, *thinking*, and *reasoning* about Things *past*, *present* and *to come*, and *contriving* for the Happiness which we long for, and *arguing* for a God in our Breasts against our *Lusts*; dare we pretend to understand, how we should feel all this, without *Souls*; or how *inanimate Matter* can thus work of its self. Yet, tho' we pretend not to such a measure of *Wisdom*, as to think our selves *wiser* than all that have been before us, who have sufficiently declared themselves convinced, both of the Existence of *Souls* distinct from *Bodies*, and of the being of a *Supreme Power*, *causing* and *governing* all things; we are loath to be so much *Fools*, as to believe we are but a handsomer sort of *Brutes*. So long as we have any use of *Reason*, we think it very reasonable we should use it, and judge of our selves, and of all things by the best *Light* and *Evidence* we can come by. And seeing our blessed JESUS hath reveal'd unto us things most highly deserving of our notice, and most serious Thoughts, and hath given us the greatest *Light* into the mysterious Things of God, and of our Selves too, that the World ever saw; and hath so strongly confirm'd the

the *truth* of all that which he taught, by the most *wonderful works*, that ever were wrought; we must proclaim our selves to be very *Fools*, indeed, if we yet choose rather to be ruled by our own *bold and blind Conjectures*, than by so clear and convincing a *Revelation*. And truly, as unreasonable a thing we think it, to *reject this Divine Revelation*, as some Men do, only because it discovers to us some *Mysteries in Religion*, which no *Reason of Man*, could ever by itself discover; and in the mean time hearken to those *confident Men*, who would without any thing but their own *conjecture* to convince us, impose upon our *Faith* as great *Mysteries in Nature*; for such we think a *wisely contrived World without a wise Maker*; a *constant Order fixed by chance*; and a *thinking, reasoning projecting Creature without a reasonable Soul*. Such Men as can hold and teach such things as these, should not, one would think, be startled and frightened out of all *Religion* by the name of a *Mystery*. But indeed the *Mystery* of this is easily enough discernable, it is not the *mysteriousness*, but the *purity* of the *Christian Religion*, at which these Men boggle; no absurdity so great, but they can swallow and digest it, so that they may be allowed their *Lusts*. Let us therefore leave them to plead for themselves, by the great *Wisdom* they pretend to be *Masters of*, at the last great day; and hearken to what our Blessed JESUS here teacheth us. And so shall we learn these things.

1. That in these *Mortal Bodies* of ours, we have *Souls* indued with *Understanding*, *Reason*, and a *Freedom of Choice*; and are hereby fitted for *Mortal Government*, as capable of *understanding Laws*, and acting according to them, and re-
flect.

flecting on our own *Actions* and *Behaviours*, and of taking and rendering an account of our selves; and that these *Souls* are the principal parts of us, and make us *Men*; and what our *Bodies* do without the notice and directions of these rational *Souls*, are not to be accounted *Humane Actions*. Those *Actions* only are to be esteem'd *Humane Actions*, which the *Soul* doth in or by the *Body*. Hence, saith St Paul, 2 Cor. v. 10. *We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

That is, That he may receive the punishment of the evil, or the reward of the good, which He, that is, his *Soul* did whilst it was here in the *Body*; which the Apostle calls the *Earthly Tabernacle* of this House, which is to be by Death dissolved or taken down, to which the *Soul* is not so inseparably united, but that it may depart out of it, and be with Christ according to St Paul's wish, Phil.

Knowing, saith he, — That whilst we are at home, that is, dwell or are conversant in the *Body*, we are absent from the Lord; we are willing rather to be absent from the *Body*, and to be present with the Lord, 2 Cor. v. 6. 8. We have then *Souls* in these *Bodies*, which can depart and be absent from them, and be where our *Bodies* are not. Let us therefore glorifie God with our *Bodies*, and without *Spirits* which are his —

2. When we die, we do not cease to be. By Death we mean not an annihilation, or turning any part of us into nothing, but a dissolution or separation of our two parts asunder; the *Souls* leaving of the *Body*, and the *Bodies* returning to corruption. Our *Souls*, I say only leave out
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Bodies and *die not*, neither corrupt with them. Whilst our Bodies lie in the *dust*, our Souls are lodged elsewhere, better or worse, according as they have in the Body behaved themselves. Then, that is, when we die, the *dust*, that is, the Body which God made of the dust of the Earth, shall return to the Earth as it was; and the Spirit, or Soul, shall return to God that gave it, Eccl. xii. 17. Fain would they, who can delight in nothing but a *beastial* Life, believe that they shall die as they live; like the *Beasts* which perish. How great a satisfaction would it now be to such Men, seeing they know that they cannot avoid *dying*, to know also, that their Souls too (if they have any such things, as one would think by the little care they take of themselves, they have not) shall die with their Bodies, and that Death will make an end of the whole Man? This would please them, who can be pleased with nothing but *bodily* things, a great deal better, than for the hope of enjoying a happiness, which they can yet have no sense of, to be abridg'd of their freedom of doing now as they list, and not to be allowed to serve their Lusts, without feeling now and then the lashes of their own Consciences. Our Blessed Saviour, who came to make us happy, teacheth us that we may be so, *first* to behave ourselves like Men, to understand what we are, what kind of things God hath made us, and what it is, wherein our happiness must consist. He hath assured us, that we have Souls which shall survive these Bodies, and therefore bids us, not to fear them which can kill the Body, but after that have no more that they can do; but rather to fear Him, who after he hath killed the Body, is able

able to cast both Soul and Body into Hell. Matt. 10. 28. And yet will not He so destroy either Soul or Body, as that they shall be no more at all, but so as that they shall never be happy, if they be not well prepared for it before Death.

Let us mind well what our Saviour here saith, *The Rich Man* (saith he) *died, and was buried, and in Hell lift up his Eyes, being in torments.* Immediately upon his Death he is found in Hell and in torments. Where Hell is, is a thing not told us, and 'tis a foolish curiosity to enquire about it. Hell in Scripture signifies the invisible State of the dead; and where-ever the dead are in torments, there is the Hell of wicked men. Into such an uncomfortable state of torments, the Souls of wicked men go immediately when ever they die. The Rich Man's Body was buried, it was laid up in the Earth, and yet then was the Rich Man, that is, his Soul in Hell. As Lazarus, that is, the Soul of Lazarus was carried as soon as he died by the Angels into Abraham's Bosom: So was the Soul of the Rich Man carried, it may well be supposed by Devils or Evil Spirits into Hell to be tormented. As Lazarus was immediately after Death at rest in Abraham's Bosom, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours, Rev. —

So the Rich Man was immediately after Death in torments, in sorrow and pain, grief and anguish; then begun his endless troubles in the Region of darkness, a most disconsolate condition. All his purple and fine Linnen, all his sumptuous fares, all his feasting and jollities, all his vanity and glory are now at an end for ever; and there is nothing but a gnawing worm, and unquenchable fire, weeping and wailing and gnashing of Teeth. He that would not go when he dies into this con-

condition, must not do as the *Rich Man* did in this Life to fit himself for it, and make it unavoidable. He must resolve to live a very *serious* and *sober* Life upon Earth; for what saith the Saviour of Sinners, *Luk. vi. 25. Wo unto you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.*

The *Rich Man* in Hell is in torments. Torments are felt or they are no torments. The *Rich Man's* Soul was too much tormented to Sleep, it was not in a senseless state; I suppose, when it was in torments. His Body indeed was carried (in State very likely) to his grave and knew it not, it lay rotting there and perceived it not, it was eaten with Worms, and felt it not; but his Soul was in torments, yet was it not in the worst of Torments, such as shall follow the sentence of Condemnation which Christ the righteous Judge of quick and dead, shall pronounce in the last great and terrible Day: However the torments he was in, were very grievous, even such as are likened to the scorching of Flames, for such doth the *Rich Man* complain of, saying, *I am scorched in this Flame, v.*—It is not easy to say, or conceive how grievous these torments are; we may hear more of them anon, God grant we may never feel them.

Let us therefore pass the time of our sojourning here in fear, 1 Pet. 1.—and be very careful not to mistake the *Rich Man* in his way of living, lest we come into his sad condition so soon as we die. Stand in awe and Sin not. Psal.—Do not those things now with delight and pleasure, which will certainly bring us into these Torments. The readiest way to fall into the torments of Hell, is to think little of them, and never to fear them, but to pass our time in vain Mirth and Pleasure, and not to think of the day when we shall be brought to that

that we may not now be troubled with the thoughts of them. To be *daring* and *confident*, to be careless and live at random, to do what now pleaseth us best, and take all the Liberty we can get, is a very sure way not to miss of *Hell* and its *Torments*. Let us therefore take heed of going the way that's *smoother* and *easiest*, most abounding with the pleasures and delights of the World; the high Way of the vain *Gentleman*, and the broad Path wherein we see the *Multitude*, daily going in great crowds. Let us be sure to walk in the *narrow way* with the few and *despised*, keep close to the *Commandments* of God, and not wander as our own *Lusts* and fond *Affections* lead us.

Again, seeing that *immediately* after Death we shall either be with the *Rich Man* in *Hell*, or with poor *Lazarus* in *Abraham's Bosom* in *Torments* or in joy: Let us make all the *hust* we can to *repent*, and to live well, because we know not how soon we must die. If we die this night, and be not prepared by an unfeigned *Repentance*, and a *Holy Life* for Heaven; we shall be sure this night also to be in *Hell* and in *Torments*. If this were well thought on as it deserves, we would be sure to do all that we can to make up our accounts, and to set all straight betwixt God and us before we go to Bed. We would not venture to lie down to Sleep with one Sin unrepented of, least we should awake in *torments*. O, how comfortably goeth that Man to take his rest, who *lives* always in the *fear* of God all the day long, Prov.—And hath the *Testimony* of a good Conscience that in all *Godly simplicity* he hath had his conversation in the World——Such an one can comfort himself in this, that tho' he should never awake again to

see the light of this Life; yet he is sure that he shall find himself in *Abraham's Bosom*, and in the sweetest Society of the *Blessed*, in joys which shall never end. Let us well consider this now in the time of our *Health*, in the days of our *Youth*, and our *prosperity*, in the *affluence* of our *Worldly Wealth*, in the height of our *pleasures* and *joys*, our *recreations*, *sports* and *merry meetings*: What a great change may there be with us on a sudden, ere we can be aware of it? How quickly may we drop down dead, whatever we are a doing? And in what a consternation will our Souls be, if not prepared for *Heaven*, when they see the *Devils* coming to snatch them away from all their delights at once, and hurrying them in haste to *Hell*, striving which shall out do the other in exercising their *Malice* and *Cruelty* in *tormenting* them?

O! What ado make we most of us to get into the way of the *many*, and to put our selves into the *fashion* of the *most*? No way but the *broad way* of *destruction* is pleasant to us; what a stir make we in striving who shall go *fastest* in it? How do we *jostle* and *molest* one another to get *foremost*, as if every one were afraid of nothing more, than of coming *last* to *Hell*? We seem to be of nothing more *Ambitious*, than of getting a place as near this *Rich Gentleman*, as we can in *Hell*, by following his *fashion* as much as we can on Earth. What a bustle do we make about these *Mortal*, and every day *dying Bodies* of ours, *destroying* their *Health* often with an *excessive* care to keep them in *Health*, and even *killing* them out of hand, to keep them from *dying*? The short time of our living here is most of it spent by many of us, in nothing else, but either in *providing* for
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our *Bodies*, or else in entertaining and caressing them with the *Provision* we have made. Fain would we keep them always out of the *grave*. And when we see that there is no hope of doing that, but the old House will drop down at last; after we have done all that is in our power, and a great deal more than it deserves, or is fit to be done, to *uphold*, *dawb* and *furnish* it; what *care* and *cost* is usually bestow'd upon it, even when 'tis *falln*? And what ado is there to have it *honourably* laid up to *rot*? In the mean while, how little care take we to preserve our *Souls* in good *Health*, or to keep them from going down to *Hell* when we die? Little do we think, whilst we are very busy in making too much of our *Bodies*; that we are even *thereby* fitting our *Souls* for *torments*. Little do we consider, that whilst we are so very solicitous how to keep our *Bodies* in *Health*, we thereby not only *kill* them, but our *Souls* too? Do w^e in earnest ever think, that whilst we are so much concerned to provide by our last *Will* and *Testament*, to have our dead *Bodies* waited on by people in *Black*; as tho' the World had *lost* something in losing us, that's worth the *Mourning* for; the *black Divels*, not without our own *invitation* of them, by a *voluptuous* and *vain* Life, are ready waiting for our *Souls*, as soon as they are out of their *Bodies*; that whilst this Honour is done to our *Bodies*, they may carry our *Souls* to be *tormented* in *Flames*. Fools that we are! Our *dead Bodies* will not be at all *sensible* what *Mourners* follow it to the Church, what *Lies* are for a piece or two of our *Gold*, told of us to our *Friends* there; but our *Souls* will be sadly *sensible* of the *torments* they shall endure that While in *Hell*. What a folly is it to be careful that we have that respect paid us, whereof we cannot have any

Sense at all; and to take no care at all to prevent those torments which all that while, yea, and for ever after, we must most sadly feel?

The *Rich Man* when he dy'd went to *Hell*, and was there tormented, and then it follows, that he lift up his Eyes, and saw *Abraham* afar off, and *Lazarus* in his Bosome. This is it that we are next to consider.

He lift up his Eyes and saw; so speaketh our Saviour of the *Rich Man* in *Hell*. But how can this be? What Eyes could the Soul of the *Rich Man* in *Hell* have to lift up? His Bodily Eyes had lost all sight, if not before, yet so soon as he was dead; and now they lay closed up in the Grave. His Soul only was in *Hell*, and carried nothing of its Body along with it thither. It had a power of Commanding the Eyes, and other parts of the Body, whilst it dwelt in the Body; but now being out of it, hath nothing to do with them, in what Sense then is the *Rich Man* said to have lift up his Eyes.

In Answer to this, we must consider, that as the *Holy Ghost* in Scripture often speaketh of God after the manner of Men, so our Saviour speaks here of the Dead after the manner of the Living, or of the Soul separate after the manner of Soul dwelling in a Body; as tho' it were still in the Body, and us'd it as before. In our present state of Mortality, we are capable of understanding very little of the Nature of Spirits, or of the manner, how they act and work; and therefore Expressions are borrow'd from material Things, and applied to Spirits in a figurative way of speaking, to help us in our Understanding, as far as we are now capable of it. Thus, God's Eyes in Scripture

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signifie his *Knowledge*; and his *seeing* is his *knowing*, and in like manner do the *Spirits* or *Souls* of Men, when departed out of their *Bodies* see, that is, they *know*. They see not with *Bodily* Eyes as formerly, but with *intellectual* or *mental* only; they *perceive*, *discern*, and *clearly know*; and this is all that's meant by the *Rich Man's* *lifting up of his Eyes*, and *seeing*. He *knew* and *considered* the condition wherein both *Abraham* and *Lazarus* were, and how much better it was than his *own*. How *happy* they both were, whilst he was in *Torments*. And, to be sure, this was no pleasing sight to him. There was nothing that he saw, which added not to his *Torment*. It well deserves our *Consideration*.

1. He *lift up* his *Eyes* to see. *Abraham* and *Lazarus* were now *above*, and he *below* them, he must look up, to get a sight of them. O what a tormenting sight must this needs be to the proud *Rich Man*. This humbling sight makes his own *Pride* his *Tormenter*. Wicked Men carry their *Vices* along with them when they go out of this *World*, and these will make it *Hell* to them wherever they go, and *torment* them worse than the *Devils* can do; they need nothing else to make them *eternally miserable*, unless they can fly from *themselves* they must be so. Seeing they never were *converted*, and *changed* in their *affections* whilst they lived, but carried all their *worldly*, *carnal* and *ambitious* Inclinations of *Mind* along with them out of this *World*, and these in another *World* meet with nothing that's *suitable*, but all things *contrary* to them, they must even in *this* alone find *Hell* enough, were there nothing else to *torment* them. To *hunger* and *thirst* always after that which is not to be had, is vexati-

ous enough. What is it then to see *another feasting* himself on the things which he always loved best, whilst *we famish*? But who can imagine the *troublesome* and *fretting* thoughts which prey on the *proud Gentleman's* Soul, when he sees a *poor despised* and *scorned Beggar* advanced to the greatest height of *honour* and *happiness*; whilst he is cast *down* into the depth of *disgrace* and *miser*ry? For the *rich-man* to lie so far *below* poor leprous *Lazarus*, who was wont to lie among his *dogs*, this must needs grind him to the heart. How do his *pride*, and *envy*, and *spite*, now all fly upon him, and tear his Soul?

2. He saw *Abraham*, it was torment enough to him to see *Lazarus* so advanced; What is it to see *Abraham* too? *Abraham*, I say, entertaining *Lazarus* in his *bosome*, using him as his *darling*, and *best beloved*? Of what was this *Rich-man*, and such as he, wont to boast more loudly than of this, that they derived their Pedigree from *Abraham*? Father *Abraham* they had in their mouth on every occasion. *We*, say they to our blessed *Saviour*, have *Abraham* to our *Father*. *We* be *Abraham's Seed*, and were never in *bondage*, Joh. 8. 33. What tellest thou us of making us *free*? How did all the *Jews* glory over other men, as *dogs* and *unclean* things, unfit for *their* Company, or *God's* mercy, on this account, that they were descended from the Loins of *Abraham*? Yea, so much they valued themselves upon this point of *honour*, that they thought it not worth their while to hearken to the blessed *Saviour* of the World calling them to Repentance, that they might be *saved*. What could they have to *repent* of? What was there for them to be *saved* from? What better Condition could they be put

put into by *Christ*, than that they were in already, by their being the Seed of *Abraham*, who had the sure Promise of a *Blessing* on Himself, and on his Seed for ever? God had made an everlasting Covenant with *Abraham*, and with his Seed after him, and this Covenant was Confirm'd to them by the Sacrament of *Circumcision*, and therefore why should they fear that they could ever want a *Blessing*? But alas, this vain confidence of the *Rich-man* could not keep him out of *Hell* when he died. There, indeed, he had a sight of *Abraham*, but such a sight as little pleased him; a sight that undeceived him to his eternal sorrow. He saw *Abraham*, but it was both above, and a far off; so far above he saw him, that it was in vain for him to hope, that he should ever come near him, or receive any good from him. Now he found what good his vain boasting had done him, and saw his Error and Mistake when it was too late. He did not err in that he believed a *Blessing* was intail'd on *Abraham's* seed; but he erred concerning the Seed of *Abraham* on whom it was entail'd, and in the *Blessing* too, which was entail'd upon that Seed of *Abraham*. He thought the *Blessing* had been a temporal *Blessing* on Earth, and that the *Messiah*, who was to be of the Seed of *Abraham*, would restore again the Kingdom to *Israel*, and make such as he was Lords of the World; that so he might have liv'd like a Gentleman still, eating the Fat, and drinking the Sweetness of the Earth, and leaving a large Inheritance to his Children to fare as sumptuously on as he had done. And if it had been so, then had he been mistaken in this too, that he thought himself to have a better Right to all this than *Lazarus* had, seeing *Lazarus* was of the

Seed of Abraham as well as *he*, and on that account must have as good a right to fare *sumptuously* on the good things of the World as he had done. But besides this, he now saw how little he understood what the *Seed of Abraham* was: He knew not how to distinguish between the natural and spiritual *Seed of Abraham*, nor what *Blessings* belonged to each of them. How that, not because they are the *Seed of Abraham*, are they therefore all *Children*. They which are the *Children of the Flesh*, these are not the *Children of God*; but the *Children of the Promise* are counted for the *Seed*, Rom. 9. 7, 8. They who are of the faith, the same are the *Children of Abraham*, and are blessed with faithful *Abraham*, Rom. 3. 7. 9. And this Faith it was, as was said before, that placed *Lazarus* in *Abraham's* bosom.

How must now this sight of *Abraham* a far off, sting the Soul of the *Rich man* in *Hell*? It could not but put him in mind of the dignity whence he was irrecoverably fallen, and of the happiness which he might now have had, if he had been as wise as *Lazarus*, and behav'd himself in this World, as became a Child of *Abraham*. He must now needs sadly fret within himself, and grow mad with reflecting on his own Folly. To call to mind what once he was, and what he always might have been; and then to feel what now he is, and is like to be for ever; to think with himself, that he was born of such a Father, and capable of so Glorious an Inheritance; and now to find, that he hath not only lost that Blessed state, but is cast down to *Hell*, among Devils, to be tormented with them to all Eternity; how must he for this begin to curse himself, and all his wretched Companions, that sav'd him up, and encourag'd him in, or tempted him

him

him to so great a *madness*? O, (might he now say too late) that as I deriv'd my *Being* from that *blessed* Man, whom now I see in so great *blessedness*; I had also had the *Wisdom* to have *imitated* his *Faith*, and *Holiness* of Life too! O, that I durst have *trusted* God as he did, and as *Lazarus* had learn'd of him to do! O, that I had had his *Charity*, and had as *liberally* entertain'd *Lazarus*, as he was wont to entertain *Strangers* when they came where he was! O, that I had been *perfect* before God with that happy Man, then had I never come into this place of *Torment*!

Let us here leave this *Rich Man* tormenting himself with the sight of that *Blessedness*, which once he might have made sure to himself, but now can never hope to enjoy; and learn to be wiser for our selves whilst we may. Was it such a killing sight to him to see *Abraham* above, and *Lazarus*, poor despised *Lazarus* in his Bosome? Did this unwelcome sight torment him by bringing to his remembrance his own *Folly*, and his *inhumane* Usage, and proud *disdaining* of that poor Soul often lying at his Gate *hungry* for his *Alms*? Did he now curse the Day, that ever he was so *churlish* to that good *Beggar*, as to suffer him to depart *hungry* and *naked* from his Gate? Let then every *unmerciful* Heart among us consider this, and think with our selves, if we were brought into the *Rich Man's* Condition in *Hell*, what we would then give, that all our *Sins*, and this of *unmercifulness* especially, were blotted out both of God's, and our Remembrance; and that they might no longer *haunt* and *torment* us. Let us in time change that course of Life, which will be sure to make not only our own *past Sins*, but *other Men's happiness* our *Tormentors*. We should
do

do well to remember now what we are told will then do us no better Service, to remember how pleasant soever it be yet to us, but add to our Torments.

It will then be a great Torment to our proud Spirits, to find that we are brought into so low and vile a Condition, that no other Company, but that of Devils, is thought fit for us.

It will more torment us still, to see those whom we have most despised for their low Estate, and mean Condition in this World, very highly advanced in Honour above us. Then shall we say to our selves with those whose Words we read. *Wisd. v. 1. &c.* Then shall the Righteous Man stand in great boldness, before the Face of such as have afflicted him, and make no account of his Labours. When they see it, they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the strangeness of his Salvation, so far beyond all that they looked for. And they repenting, and groaning for anguish of Spirit, shall say within themselves, This was he, whom we had sometimes in Derision, and a Proverb of Reproach. We Fools accounted his Life madness, and his end to be without Honour. How is he number'd among the Children of God, and his Lot is among the Saints. Therefore have we erred from the way of Truth, and the Light of Righteousness hath not shined unto us, and the Sun of Righteousness rose not upon us. We wearied our selves in the way of Wickedness and Destruction; yea, we have gone through Deserts where there lay no way; but as for the way of the Lord we have not known it. What hath Pride profited us? Or what Good hath Riches with our vaunting brought us?

This will yet more torment us, that we shall not be able to forget, but must have always in our remembrance

membrance all those things which we would fain remember no longer. All our *vain pleasures*, that are past and gone, all our *Sins and Follies* that ever we have been guilty of, all the *admonitions* and *good Counsels* that we have despised, and whatsoever else may revive in us a *vexatious Sense* of our own *baseness*, and provoke us to *bate* our selves.

Add to all this, a *prospect* into that *Happiness* which we might have enjoyed, and been as welcome to, as any other; but through our *Folly* in wilfully rejecting it when most freely offered unto us, we have now excluded our selves from for evermore.

Let us all consider these Things in time, whilst the Thoughts of them may do us good, and before we die, for in *Hell* it will be our *Torment* to consider them. The only way to prevent, which is.

1. To call to mind our *past Sins*, and so to consider them, together with all their aggravating Circumstances, that by this Consideration we may be thoroughly *humbled*, for he alone that *humbleth himself*, shall be exalted: He that *judgeth himself*, shall not be judged of the Lord. He that would not be laid low in *Hell* after Death, must now learn to be *vile* in his own Eyes, and to judge himself worthy of no better than the lowest place in *Hell* whilst he lives; and account that the very worst Condition that he can fall into on Earth, is by much too good for him.

2. Not to trust to any *outward Privilege* whatsoever, for which he may possibly think himself above other Men. Let us take heed how we value our selves on the account of our *noble Birth*, and *Parentage*, of our *gentile* and *liberal Education*, of our great *Wealth* and *Abundance*, of our high
Honours

Honours and Dignities, of our Health and Strength, and vigorous State of Body or Mind; of the Piety, Vertue, generous and noble Acts of our Progenitors, or of any thing else in the World, but the Love and Grace of God through Jesus Christ, and his Holy Spirit, enabling us to live an holy Life, in Obedience to the Gospel of our blessed JESUS.

To wish heartily, and devoutly pray for, and, as much as in us lieth, strenuously and indefatigably to endeavour to promote the Temporal Happiness of all, and to help them forward in the way to Eternal Salvation. Then are we sure, that it shall never be a trouble or vexation to us to see them happy in Abraham's Bosom, but the more we shall see there, especially if God have made us any way instrumental to the bringing of them thither, the happier shall we feel our selves, and their Happiness will so become our own.

Lastly, Let us bath our Souls in Tears of Repentance, so shall not the Fire of Hell have any power at all, so much as to scorch us. If we now blot our Sins out of our Lives, and of our Affections, God will blot them out of the Book of his Remembrance, and not leave so much as one of them to torment us in Hell.

LUKE

LUKE XVI. 24.

And he cried, and said, Father Abraham have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his Finger in Water, and cool my Tongue, for I am tormented in this Flame.

WE have already, in a good measure, discovered the sad state of the *Rich Man* after his Death. In the following Verses, we shall discover a great deal more of it. Our Blessed JESUS having told us of these two Persons, both how they lived, and how they died, and also what became of them when they were dead; how that after Death the one of them was carried into a place of rest and comfort, and the other lay in a place of torment: He now in that which follows, represents this *Rich Man* to us, *discouraging* with *Abraham*, and *petitioning* him for mercy.

IV. This is it that we are now to consider, *What discourse is here supposed to have been between the Rich Man below, and Abraham above.* And, indeed, it is well worth our most serious consideration.

He, that is, the *Rich Man* cried out, or called aloud unto *Abraham*, whom, as was said before, he saw afar off; yet (as is here supposed) within hearing: and said, *Father Abraham, &c.*

Now

Now, when we read or hear this, we are to remember that we read or hear the Words of a *Parable*, and not of a *History*. The *Rich Man's* Body is before said to be *Buried*, and so must here be supposed to lie in the *Grave*, and therefore in *Hell* he had no *bodily Tongue* or *Voice* to *cry* or *call* with, any more than he had *bodily Eyes* there to *lift up* and *see* with. Neither are we to think, that the *Rich Man* and *Abraham* were so near one to the other, as that the one could *hear* the other, how *loud* soever he should *cry*. The whole discourse is *Figurative* and *Parabolical*; and things in themselves not now to be seen by us, are here represented to our thoughts, as in a *Scene*, and the *Spirits* of *dead Men* now in an *invisible State*, are *painted out* to our view, as tho' they were in *Bodies*, and seem to *discourse* one with another in their state of *separation* from their *Bodies*, as they were wont to do whilst in their *Bodies*. When therefore it is said, that the *Rich Man* in *Hell* *cried*, &c. That which we are to understand by it is this, that as soon as this *Rich Man* was *dead*, his *Soul* was in so very *sad* a condition, and so *tormented* with the *Sense* of it, that he was now as desirous, and would have been as glad of any small *ease* or *relief*, as ever the *poorest Beggar* would have been of a *seasonable Alms* from him in his *Life time*.

There are *two* sorts of *torments*, wherewith the *Souls* of *wicked Men* shall be *tormented* after *Death*. The *former* sort is of such as arise from the *Sense* they have of what they have lost, which (as hath been said) is represented unto us in this *Parable* by the *Rich Man's* seeing *Abraham* *afar off*, and *Lazarus* in his *Bosome*; a happiness so irrecoverably lost, that it is in vain to send one *wish* after it. The *second* sort is of those which consist in a
Sense

Sense of Pain, so violent and intolerable, that they would do any thing to obtain the least measure of *ease or refreshment* by any hand whatsoever. And this is the principal thing which is here in this *Vers*e commended to our meditation.

1. That the *tormenting pains* which the *wicked* suffer immediately after *Death* in their *Souls* only, and before the great day of *Judgment*, when they shall receive the *final doom*, are so great and dreadful, that they are likened to those of being *Burned* or *Scorched* in *Flames of Fire*. *I am tormented in this Flame*, so doth the *Rich Man* here cry out of his *torments*, which in his *Soul* he already endured, even whilst his *Body* lay *insensibly* in the *Earth*. What these *tormenting pains* really are, no *Man* living can tell us. But every one that hath felt it at any time, knows what the pain of *Burning* is, and that it is very *Sharp*. So *Sharp* at least are the *Pains*, whatever they be, that *wicked Souls* must feel after *Death*. I confess I can understand nothing else by these *Pains*, but the *tormenting Sense* which they shall then have of the *wrath of God*, which they have all their *Life* long been kindling against themselves. This *wrath of God* we find frequently described under the *Metaphors of Fire and Burning*. It is said to *wax hot* against *Sinners*, *Judg.* 2. 14. and often in other places, and to *Burn like Fire*, *Psal.* 89. 46. *He burned against Jacob like a flaming Fire that devoureth round about*, *Lam.* 2. 3. *I will blow upon you (saith God) in the fire of my Wrath, and ye shall be melted*, *Ezek.* 22. 21. and v. 31. *I have poured out mine indignation upon them, I have consumed them with the fire of my Wrath*. We read of his *fiery indignation*, *Heb.* 10. 27. And in this respect, *Our God* is called a *consuming Fire*, *Heb.*

12. 29. *Wicked Souls in Hell will be sensible of this, which now they will by no Arguments be perswaded to believe. Feeling will convince them, when to be convinced, and to be tormented will be all one.*

2. That so very sharp and intollerable, are the pains of *wicked Souls* departed hence, that the least degree of ease and refreshment, would be accounted a very great kindness. Let us here think but well within our selves, what a very small thing in appearance it seems to be, that the *Rich Man* doth with so much earnestness beg of *Abraham*, tho' all in vain. He is here supposed to cry, to call aloud; that is, with the greatest earnestness he could use, to desire a kindness from *Abraham*; and the better to move him, and to excite his bowels of compassion, he useth the most endearing compellation, that of *Father, Father Abraham*; saith he, it is not possible how *wicked a Son* soever I have been, that thou shouldst forget what it is to be a *Father*; thou canst not have lost the natural affection which all good natured *Fathers* are wont to have even for the worst of their *Children*. Tho' I have no goodness left in me, for which thou canst now love me; yet, the very misery I am in cannot chuse but move thee to pity and compassion, and therefore, dear *Father Abraham*, I beseech thee by that great goodness which is inseparable from such a *Father*, have mercy on me. A mercy, a great mercy I will take it for, if thou wilt grant my request. And now consider what is it wherein he desires, that *Abraham* would exercise his mercy towards him? 'Tis only this, that he would not come himself, but only send poor *Lazarus*; not with such a quantity of *Water* as might suffice to extinguish the *Flames* wherein he was tormented,

not

nor so much as might afford his *whole Body* some little refreshment, but only a little to cool his *Tongue*; yea, so little that it is even next to nothing. Not so much as would lie in the *bollow* of ones hand; but only as much as *Lazarus* might dip not his *whole Finger*, but the tip only of his *Finger* in. Suppose now we saw one lying in the midst of *Blames*, and all over Scorched and Burned with them; how little comfort or ease can we imagine that such an one could receive from one drop of *Water* falling on his *Tongue*? Yet how glad now would this *wicked Soul* have been of so small a thing as this? How great then must those torments be which make so *inconsiderable* a refreshment seem very *desirable*? I say, so *inconsiderable* a refreshment, for we cannot conceive, that had it been granted him, he could at all have been *sensible* of it.

How would this *Rich Gentleman*, when alive, have *swagger'd* and *sworn* at him, who should have offer'd him a cup of *cold Water* to drink, such *Liquor* as that, he was wont to leave to his *Dogs*; and it may be, what they had left and defiled, he might bestow on *poor Lazarus*; whilst himself drank *Wine* in *Bowls*. He that could never be satisfied without *faring sumptuously* every day, now *burns* continually without any *intermission* or *abatement*, and would most willingly give all the *Riches* he had been master of, with all his *gorgeous apparel* and *sumptuous fare* too, might he have the disposing of them once again, for one *single drop* of *cold Water*, or for so much ease as such a cooler could give him. One drop for his *Tongue* would now be a *feast* to him.

H

But

But why for his *Tongue*, rather than for any other part doth he beg this *Mercy*? Why possibly his *torments* were more for the Sins of *that*, than of any other part: that is, he might possibly now feel the *wrath* of God hottest upon him, for the Sins of that unruly Member. He might now remember, how no *Meats* or *Drinks* could satisfy him, whatever they cost, or *whoever* was made to pay for them; but those of the *finest* and most *delicious* relish; nor would these go down without the daintiest *Sauces*, and most generous *Wines*. The Gentleman is now made sensible, what it was to *blaspheme* his *Maker*, and to *mock* his *Redeemer*, and to speak *despitefully* of that *Holy Spirit*, who should have been his *Sanctifier*. Now he remembers how *boldly* he was wont to *profane* the Sacred Name of God, what volleys of *Oaths* he used to send out, as it were to *batter* and *rend* the Heavens, how he *curst* by that Holy Name every person and thing that displeased him; and thought he used his *Tongue* with the greatest grace, when in a piece of gallantry he *curst* himself, and almost at every other word *daied* God Almighty to *damn* him both *Body* and *Soul*. He finds that now he has nothing better than this bitter fruit of his own *Lips* to feed upon. Now he may call to mind how often he had with his *Tongue* abused the *Holy Word* of God, and how often he had *jeered*, and exercised all this profane *Wit* he had, in abusing such as pious *Lazarus* for making it the rule of their Conversation. Now he sees the vanity of his *glorious Lies*, and feels all the *Back-bitings*, *Slandering*s and *Revilings* he was wont to distribute among his Neighbours. He now feels the heat of that *choler*, which used to spend its self in *Angry* and *Bitter Words*, and which he

was wont to throw forth on others at every turn with much pride and passion. Now he feels the Devil tearing him, whom he had called on so often to take him. All his vain Boastings, his Hectoring and Brawling, his Ranting and Domineering; his terrifying every poor Lazarus, and driving him away from his Gates with reviling and threatening Language, and his denying him the mercy of a crumb from his Table. All these Sins of his Tongue are so many Flames to torment him. And oh! now for so much mercy, so much ease, as one little drop of cooling Water might give to a Scorched Tongue. But it is not to be had, as little as it is, that Tongue set on Fire by Hell, and having so often helped to set on Fire the whole World, hath left no Water of refreshment in store for itself; but must fry for ever in Hell Flames.

3. That the Rich Churl is now in Hell become a wretched Beggar; a Beggar in so great want and misery, that he is at his Wits end, and knows not which way to turn him. He would now beg of any Body, and be glad of any, the smallest relief that any hand can afford him. He was once too great to touch the Ground with his knee, or in any posture to pray to God, saying, Our Father which art in Heaven. He had been long full, and every day glutted with whatever his Soul longed for, and had wanted nothing of his Hearts desire. And for what should he pray? He had enjoy'd all the Lusts of the Flesh, and Eyes, and pride of Life, even whilst he forgot God, and had him not in all his thoughts; and to whom should he pray, who had all things within himself? Why should such Gentlemen be troublesome to God, when they have all things, as they think, without him? Let poor Leprous and

indigent Lazarus, and such vile *outcasts* as he, who have nothing of their own to trust to, lie prostrate on the Ground *petitioning* God for *daily Bread*; this is too much *below* the Gentleman, whose business it is to *consume* vainly what others labour for, and not to trouble his head about any thing else, but how to spend and waste *gentilely*.

And yet pain or fear will sometimes make the Rich Man pray, and send him even against his inclination to call upon God. Tho' he have no desire at all of Grace, yet will he sometimes beg for Mercy. The Rich Man would fain be at ease, tho' he hath no mind at all to be holy and good. He considers not what must fit him for a Life of Glory in Heaven, he's not yet willing to part with Earth for it; but what will help him to live gloriously here, for here he would fain live for ever. But, alas, the Begging of Mercy, without praying heartily for Grace is Labour to no purpose. That one Grace of Charity, and shewing Mercy to the Poor, would have done the Rich Man more good, than all the most earnest prayers that he can make for Mercy to himself either in Earth or Hell.

This we can easily believe, That wicked Men even in Hell, are very desirous of Mercy, whereby they might be either out of Hell, or more easy in it. And therefore for Mercy the Rich Man prayeth, but to whom? To Abraham, Father Abraham have Mercy on me. He had been so unmindful of God all the time that he lived in pleasure upon Earth, that it seems the pains of Hell will not yet awake him to a remembrance of him. Or by his obstinacy in Sin, and long contempts of God, he had so highly provoked the Divine Majesty, that he durst not now call upon him, despairing of Mercy, and fearing more to feel his fiery indignation. Indeed,

deed, whatever were his thoughts, it was now too late for him to call upon God for Mercy. The day of Grace was now closed in an eternal Night of Darknes and Wrath. Prayers may do much good on Earth, but they are of no vertue in Hell. God is become inexorable, and shuts his Ears against all Petitions that are sent unto him thence by what hand soever. O, that whilst we are yet through the Mercy of that good God, whom such Men despise, yet alive and out of Hell, where we deserve to be, we would wisely consider of it. How little care we now for Praying, whilst we may be heard. And how earnest will we be in Prayer when it is too late? When there will be none to hear nor pity us, then and not before; we would be content to fall down and pray even to a Dog, if we thought it could bring us the least ease.

4. That the Rich Man in Hell, tho' he pray, yet prayeth he to one that can give him no relief. Father Abraham, saith he, have Mercy on me. Abraham was indeed a great Man on Earth, and he is too a great Saint in Heaven. Abraham was the Friend and Favourite of God when on Earth, and he is not lessened by going to God in Heaven. God promises often to do great things even to a wicked People, for the Covenants sake that he made with Abraham, and he is still the God of Abraham. He had great power with God, and his Prayers for others were very prevalent. He is still the Father of all them that believe, and are of his Faith; and will (no doubt of it) do them all the good that is in his power to do them. But what that is, we cannot tell; only we are sure, that we have no Commission at all to pray unto him for mercy, either from Earth or Hell. Whilst we are on Earth, we have one powerful Media-

tor between God and Man, even the Seed of Abraham, in whom all the Nations of the Earth shall be Blessed, the Man Christ JESUS, whatsoever we ask the Father in his name, he will give it us. Abraham is the Father of the Faithful, but there is another Father of Mercies, the God of all Consolation, he hath not intrusted the distribution of his Mercy to Father Abraham. Whatever pity and compassion the Saints in Heaven may be supposed to have towards those in Hell, it is certain they are not able to afford 'em any relief; neither will be that made them, then have Mercy on them. The Rich Man would now have Lazarus sent by Abraham unto him with a little refreshment. He that had no mercy on that Poor Man whilst he stood in need of some refreshment from him, would now have him sent to cool his Tongue. But to him that shewed no mercy to the Poor, no mercy shall be shewed of God. Neither hath Abraham any power to command Lazarus, neither hath Lazarus leave to go on such an Errand; as will appear from Abraham's Answer in the next Verse.

LUKE

LUKE XVI. Ver. 25.

But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy Life time receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now He is comforted, and thou art tormented.

WE have heard the earnest Petition which the Rich Man put up from Hell to Father Abraham. His request was but for a very small favour in all appearance, a *mercy*, which if he might have obtained, would have done him little good in so sad a condition; and yet as small a matter as it was, could not then be granted. When wicked men are once by Death departed out of this World, the time of mercy is quite at an end. In vain then are all Prayers made, either by themselves in Hell, or by their Friends on Earth for them. And the reason of this, Abraham here tells the Rich Man. Such Men receive their whole portion of good things whilst they live; and therefore must expect no more. Let us consider the whole answer more distinctly.

But Abraham said, that is, supposing that Abraham had heard such Words from the Rich Man in Hell, as here he is supposed to speak, thus he would have answered him; that is, the Rich Man should be made sensible, that all his desires of ease were now in vain, he must expect the quite contrary to what he would have had.

Some gracious Answer, something of *Comfort* he hop'd for from such a *Father*, from the *Head* of his *Progenitors*; surely, might he think, *Father Abraham* so good a Man, hath a mind to do his miserable *Son* all the good he can; and one so much in *God's* favour as he, must needs be able to do something for me. But the case is strangely alter'd, *Father Abraham* can no longer own him for his *Son*, nor is he allow'd to speak one Syllable of *comfort* to him. *Abraham* was always ready to do what good he could for all Men, he had an universal charity for all Mankind; he interceded with *God* for *Wicked Sodom*, and no *Stranger* could pass by his Gate to his Knowledge without a seasonable *Relief*, and liberal *Entertainment*. Yet had he not now a drop of *Water* to bestow on him that was tormented in *Hell*. All the *World* of *Angels* and *Men*, cannot administer the least degree of *comfort* to one in that Condition. His nearest Relations, his dearest Friends, who always wish'd him well, and endeavour'd his Happiness equally with their own; the best and sweetest natur'd Men, whose delight and Recreation it was on all Occasions to do good, and to shew mercy, cannot now afford him any kindness at all, not one *Tear* of *Commiseration*, not one drop of cooling *Water*, no not a little *Breath* or *Air*, so much, as to utter a short *Prayer* to *God* for him. Those Holy *Angels* in *Heaven* that would have rejoiced, and kept a *Thanksgiving Day* in the presence of *God* for his *Conversation*, will now rather rejoice to see *God* glorified in his just *Condemnation*.

All good Men, such as *Abraham* was, do always rejoice in the *Glory* of *God*. And, O, how glad would they be to see all Men on Earth glorifying *God*.

God in holiness of Life and Conversation, and to see God glorifying his own Goodness in the exercise of his Mercy and Loving Kindness towards them. How do all such holy Persons now mourn with them that mourn, and rejoice with them that rejoice, and grieve at the Heart to see any one Member of the Body miserable, that is, in any spiritual want, and in danger of being tormented in the Flames of Hell? How earnestly pray they, and with what weeping Eyes and bleeding Hearts, do they beg of God for him grace and pardon? Why? Now is the time wherein God would be glorified both in his own, and in our mercy and compassion to poor Sinners. But after Death, all Tears, all Grievs and Sorrows, of all sorts, are done away from the pious Man's Heart and Eyes, his Heavenly Joys must not be interrupted, or in the least abated, by any trouble of Mind, or Grief of Heart. Then is it the time of God's glorifying his Justice; and it becomes all his Saints to rejoice, that God is glorified in his Righteous Judgments executed on the despisers of his Mercy and Long Suffering. God now in the time of this Life rejoiceth in Mercy, and exerciseth much patience towards vile Sinners. He is always calling out unto them, *How long, ye simple ones, will ye love Simplicity? Turn you at my reproof, behold I will pour my Spirit upon you, I will make known my Words unto you.* But there will come a time when he will laugh at their Calamity, and mock when their Fear cometh; when Desolation and Destruction, Distress and Anguish come upon them, tho' they call, he will not hear, but have them in Derision. And all holy Souls in Heaven will be so far from pitying them, that they shall triumph in God's Victory over them, and rejoice in the Vengeance whereby God is pleased to glorifie his

his injured Justice, and slighted mercy upon them.

But what are the Words that by our Saviour are put into *Abraham's* Mouth, in Answer to the *Rich Man's* Petition? They are cutting Words indeed; instead of *Water* to cool, here is *Vinegar* in every Word to add to his Torment, instead of pitying him, *Abraham* is here made to speak, as if he triumphed in his Grief, and rubbed his Sores, only to increase the smart and pain.

1. SON, saith he, so thou wouldst be accounted, and so indeed thou was according to the Flesh. Remember this, for the heightening of thy Grief, what thou once wast, and what but for thy Folly, thou mightst now have been. Thou mightst, as well as any other of my Sons, have inherited the Blessing entail'd on all the Seed of *Abraham*. And why didst thou not? How came it to pass that thou now liest there tormented in that Flame, whilst others of thy Brethren are here at rest in my Bosom. Didst thou not descend from my Loins as well as they: And did not I command my Children after me, that they should keep the way of the Lord? Yes, I did, as God is my Witness, Gen. 18. With what Face than darrest thou call me Father, seeing thou wouldst not receive my Instructions, nor obey my Commands, nor imitate my Example? Hadst thou been my Child indeed, thou wouldst have endeavour'd to be like me, Thou wouldst have done my Works. Joh. 8. 39. Tho' thou wast my Son after the Flesh, yet wouldst thou not be my Son in the Faith; nay, thou hast made thy self by unrighteousness the Child of another Father, even the Devil, and with him for ever art thou like to dwell. Thou art, I say, of thy Father the Devil, for the Lusts of thy Father

Father thou wast resolved to do. Joh. 8. 44. He that committeth Sin is of the Devil, in this the Children of the Devil are manifested. 1 Joh. 3. 8. 10, O Son, that shouldst have been, remember this, and tremble and blush, Thou wast indeed one of my carnal off-spring, and didst enjoy all the Privileges of my Children, thou wantedst nothing that might conduce to thy happiness. Thou overflowedst, even till thou drownedst thy self in abundance of Worldly Things; thou hadst as much of this World's Goods as thy heart could wish for. Why then didst thou not learn of me how to Husband all such Things to thine own advantage? Why didst thou not by thy Hospitality and Charity lay up for thy self Treasures in Heaven, where Lazarus now feasteth with me? Thou enjoyedst moreover, all the holy Ordinances of God, all the means of saving Knowledge and Grace. Thou hadst Moses and the Prophets read unto thee, and wast brought up in the Church, and House of the living God. And why didst thou not believe and obey the Ministers of God, and sincerely worship and serve him as I did? O, never call me Father more. For thou wast one of those Israelites, the Children of my Grandchild Jacob, to whom pertained the adoption, and the Glory, and the Covenant, and the giving of the Law, and the Service of God, and the Promises, whose are the Fathers, and of whom, as concerning the Flesh Christ came. Rom. 9. 4. Yet wast thou not an Israelite indeed, as Lazarus was, else hadst thou now been lodged with him in my Bosome. Remember this, and be ashamed, that ever thou wert call'd my Son. Yea, remember what advantages thou hadst in the World, what Encouragements and Helps to do good, which this happy Soul then wanted; and how

how by thy wilful abuse of them all, thou liest now there *below*, and seest him here at a great distance *above*. Yea, here mayst thou see *Publicans and Harlots*, People once of the most *infamous and flagitious Lives*, upon their *early and sincere Repentance* admitted into this holy and happy Society, and Multitudes coming from all Quarters of the World, and who were none of my *carnal Seed*, and *sitting down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven*, when thou, who calledst me *Father*, and esteemedst thy self, because of my *Race*, a *Child of that Kingdom*, art cast out into darkness, where there shall be for ever weeping and gnashing of Teeth. Mat. 8. 11. 12. And now, my Son, that wouldst be, comfort thy self in thy Torments, as well as thou canst, for I can speak no comfort to thee.

2. REMEMBER, Remember I say, what thou *sain*, wouldst, but shalt never be able to forget, and what to remember, encreaseth thy Torment. Remember the things that are *past*, and never to be recalled. Remember from what an *height* thou art fallen, never to rise again, and how much higher thou might'st now have been, past danger of falling any more. Remember how many Opportunities of advancing thy self thou hast lost, and try now what thy *Wisdom* can make of that *Reflection*. Think now and comfort thy self as well as thou canst with the Thoughts of thy having liv'd like a *Gentleman*, and what a *brave and wise* thing thou lately *tookest* thy self to be; and what a *fine time* on't thou hadst upon Earth above poor *Lazarus*. O, what a biting *Memento* was this! How did this instead of *cooling* his *Tongue*, make him *gnash* his *Teeth*, *envying* the *Beggar*, and *mad* at his own *Folly*. In *extreme misery* to be
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always put in remembrance of *lost happiness*, in the midst of *Torments* to be always thinking of *former Joys* and *Pleasures* with *despair* of ever tasting them again; this is a *new Torment* still, and an *endless* one too.

Remember that thou in thy *LIFE-TIME*, &c. In thy *Life-time*? What means that? Was not the *Rich Man* yet *alive* in *Hell*? Yes, he was, and that to his *Sorrow*. Well had it been for him either that he had *never* been *born*, or that being *born*, he had *died* before he was *rich*, or that being *once dead*, he might *never* have *lived* or been *sensible* any more. But wicked Men can no more *die* as they *would*, than they will *live* as they *ought* to do. The *Rich Man* was now *alive* after *Death*, else had he not been in *Torments*, for one that is not *alive* feels nothing. He was more *dead* whilst he *lived*, than now after he is *dead*, for being *dead* in *Trespases*, and *Sins*, he was without any *feeling* of his sad *Condition*. He would now account it a *Happiness* to *die*, so he should be *cooled* not in his *Tongue* only, but *all over*. But the *Happiness* of a *Stone*, or *Clod* of *Earth*, is too much for a *wicked Man* after *death*. God designed Men's *Souls* to *immortality*, and by the *Law* of *Creation* they can *never* *die*. Our *Souls* were not made, as our *Bodies* were, of *Dust*, or any *corruptible* thing. God breathed into Man the *Breath* of *Life*, and he became a *Living Soul*. Gen. 2. 7. And when the *Body* shall return to the *Earth* as it was, the *Spirit* shall return to God that gave it. It is He alone that disposeth of *Souls* as he pleaseth, and the *wicked Man's Soul* he will have to *live*, but it shall be in *Hell* and *Torments*. And it's *eternal death* is no other but it's *eternal misery*.

I wish we would all be persuaded to *believe* and *think* of this, before we be made to *feel* it, and be able to *think of nothing else*. How gladly soever any of us, who can care for nothing but our *Bodies*, would have it so, certain it is, that our *Souls* shall never *die*. I know there be some in this Age, who exercise all their *Wis* in endeavouring to persuade us to *think*, what I am very confident they cannot yet bring themselves to *believe*, that we have no *Souls*; and all to this end, that we may have nothing else but our *Bodies* to care for. But before they make such *Fools* of us, let them tell us with all their *Wisdom*, what it is, if we have no *Souls*, that must take care of our *Bodies*; for mere *Bodies* could never yet be perceived to take any care of any thing. They that say only that our *Souls* are *mortal*, say it to this end, that we may now use our *liberty*, and never fear our *Souls* shall be punished hereafter for any *neglect* or *abuse* of themselves. But our Blessed JESUS hath assured us, That *Souls* which here *abuse themselves*, shall for ever be in *Torments*. And let us only resolve (which is a very *reasonable* thing) not to believe these *Wise Men* of the World against *Him*, till they can make it appear to us, that they deserve more *Credit* than *He*, and then I dare say, how well soever we ought to *wis* them, we shall not see cause to think them any better than *bold Fools*. As we now use our *Souls*, so shall they for ever be after death in *Comfort*, or in *Torment*. Whilst *ill Men* here live, they cannot endure to think of *dying*; but when they come to *Hell*, and live in *Torments*, they can less endure to think of *living*. Let us now take care to keep our *Souls* *Spiritually alive unto God*, and dead unto *Sin*; let us now arise from the Death of *Sin* unto
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the Life, or Righteousness, and so shall we for ever live a Life of Comfort.

Remember thy LIFE-TIME. Thou hadst a time of Life upon Earth in the Body, as well as Lazarus; and there thou didst over-live him, and by his death shouldst have been minded of thine own mortality, and of the preparation thou shouldst have made for thine own dying. Why didst thou not then take the warning that was given thee, so to fit thy self for death, that dying thou mightst not have come into this place of torments? You had each of you a time granted you to live in upon the Earth. And you knew that it was no more but a time, which was, you were not told when, to have an end. That time you then had, was the time of probation and trial, the time of discipline and learning, the time of preparation and exercise? You were both probationers for Eternity. Why then didst not thou, as well as he, so improve that time of Life as to make sure of an eternal life of joy and comfort? Should not this have been the great business of thy life-time, to work out thine own Salvation with fear and trembling? Why wast thou so foolish, as to let slip thy opportunity, and leave thy Work all undone till the night came wherein no man can work? Hadst thou not a Seed time, as well as Lazarus? And have you not now both of you your harvests; when you are to reap what you have sown your selves? What hast thou now to complain of but thy self? Thou hadst a Life-time given thee, wherein thou mightst have learn'd the Way to Heaven, and mightst, if thou hadst pleas'd, have walked with the Few in the narrow way that leads to Life; and mightst have made thy self friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness, which poor La-

Lazarus

Lazarus had not opportunity to do. Hadst thou not thy past *life-time* given thee to this end, that in it thou mightst learn to *live for ever*? Was it not then thy business to *exercise thy self unto Godliness*, that thou mightst have been made meet for the *Inheritance of the Saints in light*. Shouldst thou not, whilst *living upon Earth*, have had thy *conversation in Heaven*, and so have made thy self sure of not being Excluded out of this blessed Society wherein thou now seest us?

Remember, that thy *life-time* was thy *Seed-time*. And whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap Corruption; and he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap Life everlasting, Gal. 6. 7, 8. It is very fit and just, that every one should eat of the Fruit of his own Way, and be filled with his own Devices, Pro. 1. 31. What then wouldst thou have? Hadst thou not that which grew up of the Seed which thou sowest? Hast thou not the wages thou hast been working for? Is not this the very thing thou hast taken much pains, and hast been labouring for all thy *life-time*? Wast thou not daily making provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof? Wast thou not all the while thou livedst gathering fuel for those flames which now torment thee? Was it not thy only care to treasure up unto thy self Wrath against the day of wrath? Reap therefore what thou hast sown, and make the best thou canst of the treasure which thou hast laid up for thy self. Thou hast no worse, how ill soever it is with thee, than what thou hast with much pains provided. Thou art thine own tormentor, and wast all thy *life-time* kindling the fire wherewith thou art burnt, and which is now unquenchable by all the Water that Lazarus, or any other can bring thee. Let

Let us all remember this, whilst we are on *this side the Grave*, and whilst we live, think well for what we live. This life will soon expire, and yet how short soever it may prove to any of us, it is all the time we have to provide in for eternity. Let us therefore take heed, how we waste any part of it, and let us carefully improve it all to our best advantage. Now let us be sure to be always sowing good Seed, that we may for ever feed on that which is sweet and pleasant. If we have now our fruit unto holiness, the end will be eternal life.

Remember (saith Abraham) that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy GOOD THINGS. Many good things thou hast had, which were all of them the good Creatures of God, and made for the good of Men. For Man's good they were made, but not to be Man's happiness. For Man's support and relief in his way to blessedness; but such as could not make him blessed. What canst thou name that thou wantedst! Was it wealth or honour, or pleasure, or health, or liberty, or what was it? Thou hadst not a few, but many good things, and that in such abundance, that thou hadst not only enough for nature, and for moderate delights, for thy self, and for the use of thy family, but for many others, who might have been richly feasted on thy superfluities, if thou hadst had a heart as large as thine estate, or the wisdom as well as grace to have done all the good thou mightst have done either to thy self or others, with the many good things which thou receivedst. Thou didst not in thy life-time suffer hunger, and thirst, and nakedness, as Lazarus did. Thou wast not diseased, and lame, and sore like him. Thou wast not restrained in thy liberty of going whither,

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and doing what thou hadst a mind to. Thou wast not driven to beg thy Bread, nor threatened and beaten for begging it; nor needest thou to be beholden to any Man for any of the good things of this World, but hadst all plentifully within thy self, and might'st have obliged many poor Souls which stood in need of thy bounty. How many hungry bellies might'st thou have fill'd. How many naked backs might'st thou have clothed? How many poor Prisoners and Captives might'st thou have ransomed and released? How many poor People might'st thou have set on work? How many fatherless Children might'st thou have educated, and provided for. What an addition had this course made to thine honour on Earth, to thy happiness in Heaven? Such righteousness should have been had in everlasting remembrance. How would all these living monuments of thy Charity, have eternized thy Memory, ever praising God for thee, and honouring thee as the faithful Steward of God, and his Instrument of much good to them. How might the Prayers of so many People daily sent up to Heaven for thee, have lengthen'd thy Days, and Prosperity on Earth; and help'd thee forward to eternal happiness? Thy Riches enabling thee to be rich in good Works, had thus help'd to make thee Rich for ever in the blessing of God. What a solid Foundation hadst thou thus laid up for thy self, that thou might'st lay hold on eternal Life? 1 Tim. 6. 19. But this precious Opportunity is quite lost, and now all thy good Things are quite gone for ever, nor either have they, or can they do thee any good, because thou hadst not a Heart to do good with them. Instead of so doing, Remember Son, how thou through thy vain Humor hast greatly hurt both thy self and many

ny others with these *good Things*. How thou madest it even thy Study to contrive which way to do much evil with much good. What else hast thou done with all thy *good Things*, but fed thy *Pride*, humour'd thy wantonness, pamper'd thy Body, nourish'd and strengthen'd thy Lusts, and arm'd thy Flesh to War against thy Soul, and the Spirit of God? Yea, thou didst not these things thy self alone, but took'st pleasure in those that did them. Thou fed'st the Lusts of the Rich, instead of the Bellies of the Poor, and in the way which *Pride* and *Vanity* are wont to call *Hospitality*, took'st a pleasure in maintaining a sumptuous Table, for thy Trencher-Friends and Rich Neighbours; and in spite of the Command of the blessed JESUS, left the Poor and Needy, such as *Lazarus*, to lie at thy Gate, expecting no better Entertainment than to share in the allowance of thy Dogs. How didst thou play the Devil with thy *good Things*, tempting such as needed not thy Charity to intemperance with thy Plenty; and those that needed it, to curse thy Hospitality? With the variety and delicate curiosity of thy Table, thou sharpenedst the Appetites of them, who otherwise might have fed soberly at Home, and wasted all that should have fed them, who had no Home to feed in. Was it not too much thy Recreation, to make Men first naked with eating and drinking, and then to sport thy self in their nakedness? And now remember thy Folly in thus abusing thy *good Things* unto Wantonness; and consider what fruit thou hadst in those Things, which were indeed thy shame, tho' thou gloriedst in it, and the end whereof thou now seekest to be Torment? The *good Things* which once thou hadst, are now not only gone, or left behind thee, but the cry of them follows thee to Hell; yea, they

call to Heaven for *Vengeance*, and suffer not thy cry for *mercy* to be heard. They have not only been abused by thee, into an occasion of many Sins in thy self, which without them thou hadst never committed; and therefore now call they for more Stripes to be laid on, than otherwise thou should have been beaten with, but because by them thou hast tempted and helped *others* also, to share with thee in thy Sins, they now call for the *additional Load* of all those Sins of others which thou occasionedst, to be laid upon thee too, to encrease thy Torment. Having thus abused thy *good Things*, there is no Remedy, but thou must bear the *evil Things* thou now sufferest, and that in a constant expectation of *worse things* still.

Thou receivedst *THY good Things*. Thine indeed they were, and yet not *so thine*, as if they had been of thine own making, or had been procured by thine own power and wisdom, or yet had been deserved and merited by any Service or Goodness of thine. Alas! Thou never hadst the power to make one single Hair of thy Head white or black, thou couldst not with all thy Wisdom or Art, Care, or Contrivance, Labour and Industry, add one Cubit to thy Stature, or one moment to thy Life. For if thou couldst have done this, wouldst thou have died so soon? Thou hast deserved at God's Hand nothing at all, but a sudden destruction for thy many, wilful, and long continued Sins, and all the evil Things thou art now tormented with. All thy *good Things* then, *what*, and *how many* soever they were, were *thine*, on no other account but this, that thou RECEIVEDST them. And now remember, from *whom* thou receivedst them. Hadst thou them by *Inheritance* from thy Father? Or by *Gift* from some good Friend? Or came they
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they by *Trading* or good *Husbandry*, and *hard Labour*? It may be so, *immediately* thou receivedst them some one or other of these ways, but by what *means* soever they were conveyed unto thee, thou receivedst them of *God*. *Riches and Honour come of Him*. 1. Chr. 29. 12. Of Him therefore, by what *means*, or by whatsoever Instrument they came, thou hadst all thy *good Things*, yea, tho' thou gotst *them*, it may be by *wicked Arts*, yet dost thou owe them all to *God*. *The Tabernacles of Robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure, into whose Hand God bringeth abundantly*. Job. 12. 6. And art thou not most *justly* punished for thy *abominable Ingratitude* to thy bountiful *Benefactor*? Dost thou not well deserve all the *Torments* thou now endurest, for abusing so free, so *undeserved*, so extraordinary Bounty to thee, more than to many Thousands, who never had the one half of thy *good Things*? Was it only to this end, that He bestowed so many *good Things* upon thee, which others wanted; to enable thee to do him more *dishonour* than others, and to encourage thee in a *wicked Rebellion* against him? If the *stolish* Servant, that improveth not his *Talents* shall for his *Idleness* be bound Hand and Foot, and cast out into utter darkness; whither deservest thou to be cast, who hast made thee many *good Things*, thou receivedst the *Weapons* of *Iniquity* and *Rebellion*.

THINE indeed those *good Things* were, so far forth, that thy *Title* to them, and *Propriety* in them, stood good against all the World. *Lazarus* well understood this, and therefore durst not attempt by *Robbery*, or *Stealth*, or *Pretence* of borrowing for a time, or by any *crafty* and *fraudulent Trick*, or *shift*, to deprive thee of one single Farthing,

Farthing, or Crumb. He lay *patiently* at thy Gate, waiting for thy *Charity*. He own'd thy *Right* to what thou hadst *received*, by his begging of thee an *Alms* and *Free-Gift*, for which he would have been very *thankful*. So much the greater still appeareth both thy *Obligation*, and thy *Ingratitude* to God thy *Benefactor*. He had not only greatly *enriched* thee above many of thy Brethren; but had also set a *Fence* and *Guard* about all thy *Wealth*; he had enacted *Laws* to maintain thy *Right*, and by his *Providence* kept thee in *possession*. He had ordered all Things so for thy *Security*, that no Man might *wrong* thee of any of thy *good Things* (how bad a Man soever thou wast) but upon pain of *eternal Death*. And thou, after all this, dealt'st with God, just as *churlish Nabal* did with *David*; who, tho' *David* and his Men had been a *Guard* to his Cattle and his Servants, denied him a little *seasonable Relief* for his young Men out of that great *Wealth* which he had help'd to preserve for him. Thou, an *ill natured* and *unthankful* Wretch, wouldst not relieve the *Nedy Soul* whom God sent to thy Gate, but chosest rather with thy Companions, as *Nabal* did with his, to exercise thy *Luxury* than thy *Charity*, to eat and drink unto *Gluttony* and *Drunkenness*, whilst the poor *Servants* and *Children* of that *gracious God*, who gave thee all, lay *famishing* at thy Gates. How canst thou call for *mercy* from God, or any of his *Saints*, who hadst neither a *thankful Heart* to him, nor any *Bowels of Mercy* for any that belonged unto him?

Thy *good Things* thou hast *received*, but remember, they were never *so thine*, as that thou wast *absolute Lord* and *Master*, or *Arbitrary Disposer* of them, or of any *part* of them; but so, as to be

be still *accountable* for them all unto *Him* that gave them. Thou *receivedst* them indeed of God, but *Remember*, that tho' God giveth many things to *Men*, he never giveth any thing *from Himself*. He gave thee a *Right* to them against all *Pretenders*, and all the *Claims* of other *Men*; but he never *did*, or *could* alienate his own *Right* to all Things unto any one whatsoever. Thy good Things then were all of them, when most *thine*, as much *God's own*, and at his *Disposal* as ever they were. God only made thee *Steward* of some Portion of his Goods, this was a very great *Trust* and *Honour*, and so was it a great *benefit* and *advantage*, every way a great *Obligation* to *Fidelity* and *Gratitude*, and *eminent Services*. He gave thee free leave to *use* all for *thine own Good*. As much as was *needful* for thy *self* and *Family*; and all that depended on thy *Care* and *Provision*: He gave thee very plain *Laws* and *Directions* how to order and dispose of every Thing as there should be occasion. Thou hadst a charge given of all, to see that nothing was *wasted* or *misbestowed*, but all laid out according to thy *Lord's Will*. Neither was God *hard* upon thee in any thing of this, but exceeding *kind* and *indulgent*; for (as was said) he allowed thee in the *first place*, and of the *best*, that is, of the *fittest* for thee, to serve *thy self*, and all the rest was to be used not to *His*, but *thine own Profit*. God chose thee to be his *Hand*, and trusted very much to thy *Discretion* and *Prudence*, in managing all according to some *general Rules*, which he had given; and after all, the *overflowing*, if any, was to remain to *thee* and *thine*. They that were to *praise him*, were also to *thank thee*; and God himself for thy right *Husbanding* of what was *his own*, had of his free *Bounty* provi-

provided for thee in Heaven a glorious Reward, that is, for the faithful discharging of thy *Trust* and *Duty*. O what an *Encouragement* is there, here to all *Rich Men* to be very good? But remember, how all this *Goodness* was abus'd by thee. As if all had been absolutely thine own, and thou hadst had no *Lord* over thee to be accountable to, how didst thou waste all on thy self with riotous Living? All thy care was for thy self, and for a few such Wretches as thy self, Men who had, it may be, first wasted all their own Stock of Goods on their Lusts, and then came to help thee away with thine. Thou rather chofest to feed thy *Dogs*, and *Companions* worse than they, with thy *Master's Goods*, than such as pious *Lazarus*. And was it not then high time for God to vindicate his own Right, and to call such a faithless Wretch to a severe account? Is it fit to give thee a drop of *Water* to refresh thee, who hast wasted so much *Wine*, and fed a company of *Swine*, like thy self, with the choice Dainties which God had bestow'd upon thee? O, wicked Steward, who never thought of thy Accounts on Earth, see now how thou canst make them up in *Hell*. What thou shouldst have paid in *duty*, now pay in *torments*.

Remember, that these were *THY good things*. These were the things which thou esteemedst and lovedst, above all others; and which thou chofest for thy self, slighting all things in comparison of them. These God bestowed upon thee in an ample manner, and in them thou hast had thy portion according to thine own wish. Thou hast had all that thou couldst love and delight, or take any pleasure in, that is, that was good to thee. And what reason canst thou have now to complain, seeing thou hadst thine own choice?
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Hadst thou with *Solomon* chosen *Wisdom*, possibly thou might'st have sped as well as he, and begging *Wisdom* only, might'st have had given thee in over and above what thou askedst, as he had, both *Riches* and *Honour*. Hadst thou first sought the *Kingdom of God* and his *Righteousness*, these other good things should have been added unto thee. *Matt. 6.* But seeing thou maidst so unwise a choice for thy self, thou must now abide by thy choice; take that which thine is, and go thy way, there is no remedy. If thou say'st, thou wouldst have thought thy self happy enough, and would never have wish'd for better, might'st thou have kept what thou hadst, and have lived for ever, in the same condition thou wast once in: Let me ask thee this Question, Didst thou not know before-hand, that it was impossible for thee to do so? Wast thou not sufficiently inform'd of the imperfection and insufficiency of all these good things; how that the goodness of them extended to the body only, and therefore could be no longer good to thee, than whilst thou livedst in the body? And didst thou not know, that after a few Years, at most, thou must certainly die, and leave thy body to rot in the Earth, and that thy Soul should out-live thy Body, and when it should be separated from it, it could no longer make use of any of these good things. If thou knew'st all this, why wouldst thou choose these things for thy Portion and Happiness? Why wouldst thou choose to be one of those Men of the World who have their Portion in this Life, and whose Bel-lies God now fills with his hid Treasure? *Psal. 17. 14.* Thou knew'st well enough, that these good things would never follow thee into another World. And therefore all thou hast now to do,

do, when thou art come thither, is to try if thou canst satisfy thy self with *chewing the Cud*, or *ruminating* on all thy full Meals that thou was wont to make heretofore. And if thou shalt farther say, that it may seem a Punishment great enough to have for ever *lost* all these good things, but too much, over and above that to be *tormented* in those *flames*: Still it must be answer'd, because it was thine own *foolish choice*. Never complain of hard measure, or that thy *punishment* either in the *pain* or *duration* of it is *disproportionable* to thy *fault*; neither by *accusing* God of too much *severity*, or *injustice*, seek to move *pity* in the hearts of considering Men; seeing how *sad* and *painful* soever thy *torments* be, 'tis that which thou hast *chosen* for thy self, and preferred before the unexpressible and everlasting Joys of Heaven. Thou wast often enough told, that *there is no Peace to the Wicked*, that a carnal and sensual Life is the certain way to everlasting Destruction; that a holy and spiritual Life is the way to eternal Life and Blessedness. Thou wast told, that thy Soul was to be *immortal*; that it must never *die*, or *cease* to be, and to be *sensible*. That so soon as it was departed from the *body*, it should go into an *unchangeable* state, either of *happiness*, or of *Misery*. Thou wast continually call'd upon, and earnestly intreated to take care of thy self, and invited most lovingly to partake with the *Saints* in endless *Rest* and *Glory*; and the Servants of God begg'd of thee to walk with them in the clean and pleasant Paths of *Purity* and *Righteousness*, unto *Joy* and *Blessedness*. Thou wast warn'd again and again, to take heed of walking after the *Flesh* unto death, to shun all *Sensuality* and *Voluptuousness* as a *sweet* poison, but deadly.

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God gave thee *time enough* to live, and consider, and repent of thy past Folly ; Day after Day, and Year after Year, was granted thee to think on thy later end, and to grow wiser for thy self. Yet all this would not do. Thou wouldst not believe the report of God's *Messengers*, sent early and late to warn thee. Thou wast resolved to hold on still in thine own Way, and to try *Experiments* on thy self, to *tempt* God to the utmost, and to venture all for thy present pleasure. The way thou wentst in was pleasant to thee, and thou wast resolved to try whether, or no, there were any such *torments* as thou wast told of at the end of thy pleasant Walk. Say then, Was not all the Evil thou complainest of brought upon thee by thy self ? Was it not thine own wilful and deliberated Sin that brought thee thither ? Content therefore thy self as thou can'st with that State which thou hast *chosen*. And remember farther yet, that God, the gracious and merciful God, hath ever been so far from dealing hardly and severely with thee, that he hath been not only very *patient* and *long-suffering*, but hath dealt very *bountifully* with thee. He had given thee a very liberal and *large Portion*, whereof thou never deservedst, nor could deserve the least part. Thy wicked Behaviour deserved nothing but *evil Things*, and he gave thee *good Things*, many good Things. Thou abusedst them all to his dishonour, and yet he *continued* them unto thee for a *long time*, even as long as thou livedst ; and prolonged thy Life, which thou hadst a Thousand Times forfeited, to such a length ; as that thou hadst time enough given thee to provide in for thy eternal State. Thou hadst *long* the many good Things which Thousands of much better Men

Men hardly ever were allowed a small Taste of ; and these were *those* very good Things, that thou most *desiredst*, and *esteemedst best*. Remember then, that thou hast received thy *full share*; yea *over-measure* ; thou hast had *all thy Portion* to a Farthing, and not so much as a drop of cold Water is now behind for thee to receive.

Now this was all a sad hearing to the *Rich Man in Hell*. O let us all take heed, that we come not thither to hear as much said unto our selves by our own tormenting *Consciences*, which then will be always *awake*, and pleading *too late* against our *madness* here. Here's a very fair warning given us all by our holy and loving JESUS, who would have all Men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the Truth. Let us beware, how we take up our *Happiness* in this World; for we cannot have it both *here* and *hereafter* too. If we account the Things of this World *OUR good Things*, we must be content with what is *ours*; and to leave the Things of the better World to come to those who *chose* them for *theirs*. They that are resolved to live a *Gentleman's Life* of pleasure now, must resolve too, to live his Life in *Hell* and *Torments*. There is nothing more plainly taught us in the Book of God than this, which we are so unwilling to take notice of, and yet would live in hope of being saved. That we must *deny our selves*, and with our *Cross* on our Shoulders, follow the Blessed *Saviour* of the World; we must deny our own *Wills*, and renounce our *carnal pleasures*, and set our Affections on nothing here *below*. How many good Things soever God gives us in this World, we are to take heed lest we make them *Our good Things* by loving them too well, or immoderately using them, or gree-
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dily hunting and gaping after them, or grievously resenting the loss of them. If we make them *our chief delight, and comfort*, God will make them in what proportion soever he distributes them, *our only Portion and Reward*.

Again, here we see, That *Wordly Prosperity* is a Thing which we should be indifferent for. We ought to be so far from impatiently desiring it, that we ought rather to be *afraid* of it, and to grow a little *jealous* of our selves, when ever we enjoy it. It should put us upon a very diligent *Enquiry* into the *State* of our Souls, and the *Sincerity* of our Hearts; and make us very *cautious* in our Behaviour, and *vigilant* over our Selves. We should grow afraid, lest we are not indeed so *Good* as we shou'd be, and lest what we now enjoy should prove *all our Portion*. We have no way but one to assure our Selves that our *present Prosperity* is not *all the Portion* we are like to have, and that is, to sit very loosely from all worldly good things in our Affections, and be very *indifferent*, whether we have them or no; to live as little as may be to the *Flesh*, and to take as little sensual delight and pleasure in any thing that we have; as our present Condition will allow us, to place our whole delight in doing all the good we can with the good Things we have, and to account they do us most good, when, with a truly *Christian* compassion, we *communicate* them freely to those who are in want; being as well pleased to see our good Things on other People's Backs, as on our own; and feeding the Hungry with them, to take more sweetness in their relief, than in all the dainty Rarities wherewith our Palates are too well pleased. If we can thus freely dispose of them to others, as God gave them to us,

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we make not these good Things our *Portion*, and if we do not make them so, be sure we may, that God will not.

And likewise Lazarus evil Things.

We have not yet done with the biting *Memento*, which *Abraham* here gives the *Rich Man* in *Hell*. We have heard what he bad him remember concerning his own late *flourishing state* in his *Life Time*: But this is not all, he must be also put in mind of the late *lamentable Condition* of *Lazarus*, the poor distressed *Beggar*, that used to lie at his Gate craving an *Alms*; how hardly he had fared all his *Life-time*, and what *evil Things* he had endured. This is it that every *unmerciful Rich Man* must expect: The *Contempt of the Poor* will be a hot burning *Coal*, tormenting his *Soul* and *Conscience in Hell*.

It is no News indeed to hear, that good Men receive *evil Things* in this *Life*. Neither ought this to discourage any one from being, and continuing good. For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth, Heb. 12. 6. Our blessed Saviour hath pronounced them blessed, that hunger and weep now, for they shall be filled and laugh. Luk. 6. 21. *Lazarus* was no worse Man, for being in the worse Condition. The more *evil Things* he now received, the more good Things had he yet to receive. These *evil Things* were such as might be born, and such as would do him good; and the good Things he wanted, were but *Meat* and *Drink* and *Cloaths* and good *Healib*: he wanted not *Grace* and *Goodness*, and sufficient strength of *Soul* to bear these *Wants*; he had

had an *inward Comforter*, and *Peace of Conscience*, which made all other Wants tolerable. But why must the *Rich Man* be put in mind of this?

First, to this end, That he might by this means call his *own Sins* to remembrance, that Sin, especially of not considering and commiserating the poor Man's evil Condition when he saw it, and adding to his Affliction by his denying him a seasonable relief. This must needs, at any time, be a very great Affliction to the Poor, to find no Comfort or Succour there, where, in all reason, he ought chiefly to expect it; and where alone, in all Appearance, it is not to be had. To go away Hungry from a *Rich-man's Door* is a great Disappointment, and a greater Grief of Mind, than to be denied a *little Bread* by one that hath but a little for himself. To see the *Rich Man's Dog* fed with that which himself was almost famish'd for want of, must needs bite him more than his Hunger did. Neither yet doth a *virtuous Poor Man's* missing his hop'd for relief so greatly Afflict him, as the *Rich Man's want of Charity*. His Affliction is heightened by that Charity himself, which he sees the other want, and he grieves more for the *Rich Man's* sake than his own. To think in how *sad a Condition* this *Rich Man* was because of his *unmerciful Temper*, and in how much *worse a condition* he wou'd shortly be, without a timely *Repentance*, whereof his present *churlishness* was but a bad sign, this cut poor *Lazarus* to the Heart. Remember this (saith *Abraham*) look upon *Lazarus*, and remember, how much now this addeth to thy Torments, that without any *Mercy* or *Compassion* thou didst let him lie Groaning all his Days under those Evils

he

hasten suffer'd, when it was in thy power to relieve him.

Again, this was to make him more sensible of God's *Justice*, and *Righteous Judgments* in dealing with the wicked according to their unmerciful dealings with others, and in taking care that his faithful Servants be in the end no losers by his Service; but that he hath laid up such a Reward for them in Heaven, That all the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed in them. Rom. 8. 18. Yea, That the light Affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory. 2. Cor. 4. v. 17.

These are the things which *Abraham* bids the Rich Sinner call to remembrance in Hell. And now we are farther to consider, what he here especially commends to his Notice. And that is, the great Change made in the condition both of Good and Bad Men by Death, in these Words, But now he is Comforted, and thou art Tormented.

These Words of *Abraham* we should all have very much in our Thoughts. We are all of us too intent upon things present, and upon the earthly Comforts, which now we Taste and Feel, to think so much as it concerns us, on things Future, and on the NOW here in this Text. Now, in this Life we are in haste to be happy, Now, we would have our good Things, we cannot well endure to be told, that we should wait and continue with Patience in doing Well, and suffering ill till this Life shall be at end. The NOW of this Life runs still in our mind, that other of the Life to come is too seldom in our Thoughts. Tho' that's

that's an *Eternal now*, and this *just nothing*. This ends at *Death*, and is no more; *that* begins at *Death*, and is for ever. This is it of which *Abraham* here speaks, the *State of the Dead immediately after Death*, and before the *Resurrection of the Body*, and so before the great *Day of Judgment*, and the *final State* of all after *Sentence* shall be given. All the *while* betwixt the *departure of our Souls* out of our *Bodies*, and the *rising again* of these *Bodies* from the *Dead*, we must be either in *comfort*, or in *torments*. Our *Souls* then, as was said, sleep not, nor lie in a *Senseless Condition*, neither find we here, or in any other part of *Holy Writ*, any such thing as a *Purgatory*, a place of *torment* for a *middle sort* of *Souls*, which being neither of the *best*, nor of the *worst*, are supposed by some to go neither *immediately* to *Heaven* nor to *Hell*; but into the *Skirts* or *Suburbs* of *Hell*, there by *torments* to be *purged*, as with *Fire*, from all their *dross*; and that done, to be sent into *Heaven*. We have mention made of a *State of Comfort* call'd *Abraham's Bosome*, and another of *torment* called *Hell*; neither of which shall ever end; but both of them shall admit of *augmentation*, as we shall see anon. These in the mean time are the *Things* which we are here taught.

1. That there is a *future state* after *Death* for all *Men*, good and bad. *Death* when it comes, and dissolves the *Bond of Union* 'twixt *Soul* and *Body*, doth not make an *end* of either. This is both so frequently, and so plainly taught us in the *Holy Scripture*, that I shall not need to point out the *Texts* for it. For indeed, the *whole Scripture* would be a *vain and insignificant Thing*, if this were not true. All the *Holy Scripture* was given us to this end, of *making us wise unto Salvation*,

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through Faith, that is in Christ JESUS; so wise, as to be able by the Rules of God's Word, to govern our selves in such sort so long as this Life lasts, that we may be *happy* when we *die*. And indeed, the wiser sort of *Heathen Men* were generally of this Belief, that the *Souls* of Men continued after Death, and that so, as to be *sensible* of their Condition; whereof, to spare the quoting of *Authors*, the *Idolatry* of the World hath ever been a sufficient Evidence. For most of the *Idols*, which they worshipped, were nothing else but the *Souls* of Men, which they believed to be *alive* after Death, and to have a power to do them good or hurt. Men were not in the *darkness* of *Heathenism* arriv'd at that height of *Infidelity*, which is now by too many in this Age, esteemed the *light* of *Wisdom*. They neither denied, that Men have *Souls* distinct from their *Bodies*; nor that those *Souls* *subsist* after their departure out of their *Bodies*. Whosoever therefore denieth a future state of *Souls* after Death, is one of those *conceited Fools*, who for the love he hath to his *Sin*, hath sacrificed his *Modesty* together with his *Reason* to his *Lusts*, and worshipping nothing but the *Brutish* part of himself, thinks it *Wit* to be *impudent*, and the *light* of *Gallantry* to own himself a *Beast*, and to have as little of Concern for the future, as a *Swine*. Herein is his *Glory*, that he thinks himself *wiser* for this than all *Mankind*, be they *Christians*, *Jews*, *Mahometans* or *Heathens*; for all these do generally believe the *Souls Immortality*. And that which demonstrates his *Folly* beyond all Dispute is this, That whilst he so confidently denies, what the *generality* of *Mankind* believes, and what the *wisest* of Men have ever thought they could sufficiently prove, to the Conviction of all but

but *Fools*; and whilst he will needs be thought *wiser* than all Men for denying it; he yet contends with all earnestness, that the *thing* which he denies, and others believe, is a thing which no Body can know, whilst he lives, whether it be so or no.

2. We are here taught very plainly, That the *Souls* of Men after Death are not all in *one* and the *same state* and Condition; no, not in the *interval* between the Hour of *Death*, and the Day of *Judgment*. They do not sleep all this while, neither are they *insensible* of good or evil; they are not all happy, nor all miserable; but *some* of them are comforted, and others tormented.

3. We are taught as plainly, That such as we are in this Life, good or bad, such also shall our future state be immediately after *Death*, a state of *Comfort* or of *Torment*. Good Men shall be comforted, and evil Men tormented.

These Things I say, our blessed Saviour, and his holy Apostles after him, have very plainly commended to our Faith. And we are left, as long as we live, to consider wisely of them; and to choose whether we will believe them or no. But who sees not, that it is at our Peril? If we be resolved, because we think that we have not all the Evidence that might have been given us of them, to put all to the venture, we may do so. But before we be so daring, I should think it our Wisdom impartially to weigh the Matter a little in our most serious Thoughts, and not to conclude too hastily. Let us therefore, as many as think our selves worth our own care, think of these few Things.

1. If there be such a future state of *Comfort* or *Torment*; and if either the one, or the other, must

be the state of every one of us when we go out of this World, do we not really think it a matter of greatest *Concernment* to us, that we should be in time *foretold* of it, and have some *warning* given us before-hand to provide as well as we can for our selves? Do not we think it very *fit*, we should have some *Directions* given us, what course to take whilst we live, that we may *escape* the *torments*, and make *sure* of the *comfort* which is to come? I hope no Man can be so wholly regardless of himself, as to deny this to be a Thing very desirable, on supposition, that there be such a state as either of these remaining for us all after Death; or not to think it a very great *kindness* in our blessed Saviour so *plainly* and *fully*, to *inform* and *direct* us as he hath done. If there be a future state of *Comfort* for good Men, and another of *Torment* for evil Men, and I know nothing of it, and through Ignorance live wickedly, I shall fall into the state of *Torment* for want of timely *warning* of it, or *directions* given me how to prevent it. And therefore I cannot but judge it a matter of great *Concernment* to me to be well *inform'd* before-hand. For

2. Can we possibly come to any certain and distinct knowledge of these two States any other way, than by *Divine Revelation*. It is true, that by the *Light of Nature* we may be satisfied that there is a God, and that we, being *rational Creatures*, are bound to live in *Obedience* to him, and that he will *Reward* the *Obedient*, and *punish* the *Disobedient*; and because it doth not appear, that he doth so always in *this Life*, that therefore he will do it *after Death*. But now *how*, or *where*, or *how long* he will thus *Punish* or *Reward*, no Man can do any more but *Conjecture* and *Guess*. No
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Art or Study can clearly discover these things unto us; the *wisest* of the *Heathens* were herein at a great loss, and as much divided in their *Opinions* about *these* things, as they were United in their Opinion of a twofold future State in general. Which we need not here prove, because, *more than this*, and more than *we can accept*, is *Confess'd* and *Granted* by them who disbelieve the *Holy Scriptures*, to wit, That no Man can tell what the *State* of *Dead Men* is. No Man can tell it indeed but by the help of *Divine Revelation*. By the help of this Men have been enabled to give us good *Assurance* of it, and there is no need of what our *Modern Infidels* have learn'd of the *Rich-man* in the Parable to demand, That one may be sent from the Dead to inform us.

3. Would we not be too apt to blaspheme the *Goodness* and *Justice* of God too, had he made us such as we are, and yet told us nothing of what we are to *expect* after Death. He hath made us of such a Nature, that we would fain know what's yet to *come*, as well as what's *present*; what we *shall be* hereafter, as well as what we *are* now. We are apt to *Long* and *Desire*, to *Hope* and *Fear*, in relation to things to *come*; and finding that all Men *die*, we are concern'd naturally to think, what we *shall be* when we are *dead*; and these thoughts, as they are *natural*, so are they very *troublesome* and *tormenting* to us, so long as we labour under this *uncertainty*. Would we not therefore think, that God dealt very *hardly* with us, and not suitably to the *nature* he had given us, if he had left us altogether in the *dark*, and given us no *notice* of what he had design'd for us *after this life*? If he had not acquainted us with what we are to *expect* hereafter, and if he had

had not told us his mind what he would have us to do here, we should have been apt to think he dealt not with us agreeably either to *our nature*, or that *notion* which we have of his *Goodness*.

4. Why then, now that God hath told us by his *Son*, what remains for us after death, are we not willing to believe it? What should God do with a People of our Temper; who confess the things which we are told to be of the greatest *concernment* in the World for us to *know*; and think it highly *reasonable* that God should not leave us in *ignorance* of them; yea, that it is inconsistent both with *his nature*, and *our own*, that he should do so; and yet after all, when they are as fully and plainly as such things can be *revealed* unto us, and we have nothing to object with any strength of reason against the truth of the *revelation*, will we not believe what is told us?

Who would willingly be in such a *doubtful* Condition when he comes to *die*, to think that he is leaving this World, to go he knows not whither? Good God! What a *perplexity*, and *distraction* of Mind must one at that time be in, if he be not some way or other stupified, and can think of nothing at all, to find himself stepping out of this World never to see it any more, and not to know whether he shall not *immediately* drop down into an *unquenchable* fiery Furnace; whether he shall be *something* or *nothing*; what he had hitherto been, or *something* else; in *comfort*, or in *torment*; for a *time* only, or for *eternity*? Into what a confusion must this put a *thinking* Man? If one will now, by disregarding all that he is told by so *credible* a Person as the

he blessed *Jesus*, whose very *life* on Earth seem'd nothing else but *Miracle* and *Love*, chose to be in this condition of *uncertainty* and *doubt* when he is going out of this World, and so if there prove to be a *better*, and a *worse*, after death, make the *worse* sure unto himself; such an one is to be given over as a *mad-man*, whose case, howsoever we may *pity* him, is too desperate to admit of any *cure*.

But now, if all this be true, which we are here taught by our gracious *Saviour*, concerning the *future State* of *Men*, then these *two* things do necessarily hence follow.

1. That *wicked Men* have all the comforts, that ever they must expect to have, now in this World whilst here they *live*; there are none at all for 'em, not so much as the refreshment of one Drop of Water, to be hoped for after their *Souls* are once gone out of their *bodies*. Now (saith *Abraham* to the *Rich-man*) thou art tormented. Whatever good things fell to thy share, thou hast already had them all in thy *life-time*. But now after that Life is ended, expect nothing at all but *torments*. O, what a dismal change is there here! Had he only lost all his Comforts at once, it had been more tolerable. But that's not all, as he must not expect ever to have any more *Good things*, so he must for ever suffer *Evil things*. He must be tormented, not only with the *sense* of his *loss*, and with despair of ever recovering any part of what he had lost, or of enjoying any other good thing instead of what is lost; but also with a *sense* of *pains*, even the bitterest of Pains, like that of Frying in unquenchable flames.

Here let the brutish *Epicure* sit down, and think a little of this. Let him cast up his Accounts,

and see what the gain of his trading for the *Flesh* will amount unto ; what all the *present Comforts* which now he hath in this *Life*, will yield him in the end. How little is it, that he now enjoys ? How imperfect are all his pleasures, and what a mixture of trouble and vexation doth he meet with in them all ? How quickly will they all be gone ? How do all his Joys end, before he has had the one half of what he would have had ? How suddenly and unexpectedly come his *Torments* in their room ? How sharp and intolerable prove they when they come ? How durable will they be, and without any end ? If this were but a little thought upon, it would spoil all our vain Mirth, and mad Frolicks ; it would turn our Feasting into Fasting, and our Dancing into Mourning, if we were sure that within an hour, or how much less we know not, the House we Feast and Dance in, would be all in Flames about us, and no way remaining for us to escape, but we must be Consumed to Ashes. Well then, eat, drink, and be merry, as long as thou canst, it cannot be long ; it cannot be many days, it may be but a few hours, yea, for ought thou knowst, not one, that thou hast to laugh, and be merry in ; and then, on a sudden, thou wilt find thy self in the midst of *Flames*, among *Devils*, and so must remain for evermore. Think seriously of this, and pride thy self now if thou canst in thy *Wealth*, *Health* and *Prosperity*.

2. It follows, that *Good Men* have all the *evils* they shall ever suffer, now, whilst they live in this *World*. There are none at all that they need fear to suffer hereafter ; but as soon as ever their Souls depart out of these *earthly Tabernacles*, they

they are in *Comfort*. Now (saith *Abraham* of poor *Lazarus*) he is comforted. He had all the Evils that fell to his share in his Life time. He that lay at thy Gate for Relief, and was in so low a Condition, That the very crumbs which fell from thy Table, would have been a great Comfort to him. He is now perfectly cur'd of all his Sores, he shall never hunger or thirst any more, all Tears are wiped from his Eyes, all Sorrows banish'd from his Heart. He now enjoys a perpetual Feast, and shall rejoyce in joy *unspeakable and full of Glory*, to all Eternity.

O! What a *comfort* have we here given to every *pious Soul*, how poor and wretched soever his present condition be! What an easy thing will the hope of all this unexpressible and endless Joy and Glory make it unto such a one, to suffer any Grief, Pain, or Hardship, now for a short while on the Earth! Is it evil with you now, remember, you shall be comforted. There is but a little while for you to wait, and these wretched days of yours will be at an end. Death is coming on a pace, and will be sure to put an end to all your troubles in a moment. What troubles and pains do *others* willingly undergo to gain a little Honour, or Wealth, or Pleasure, which they know they can have but a few days in this World? And wilt not thou for a few days with patience endure a little Sickness, Pain, or Poverty, for all the Comforts and Joys of a blessed Eternity, no, not for the honour, wealth and pleasures of a most glorious and everlasting Kingdom? Remember, that nothing but *impatience*, and *discontent*, can lessen thy future Joys; live therefore *piously*, and *patiently*, in a comfortable expectation of those *Comforts*, which are
 NOW

now *unexpressible*, and when once they begin, shall *never end*; and do not so undervalue thy *hope*, as not to think it worth the *patient suffering* for, but a very little while in this Life. If it go ill with thee *now*, it shall not do so long; but all will be *well shortly*, and all will be *well for ever*.

Should any one after this be so curious, as to ask, *Where* it is, these *Souls* departed, whether they be *Good* or *Bad*, must remain till the last day; and *what*, in *particular*, are the *torments* of the one, and *comforts* of the other, immediately after *Death*? To both these curious questions I think *St. Augustine's* Answer the best that can be given. It is better (saith he) to be ignorant, or to doubt of *secret things*, than to wrangle about things *uncertain*. What God hath not yet told me, cannot concern me yet to know, otherwise I doubt not, but he would have told me of it. And it is a very madness to fall out one with another in disputing about things which are therefore uncertain to us, because *unreveal'd*; because for want of *revelation*, the *controversy* cannot be decided, and the *dispute* is *vain*. Let us endeavour to learn now, and be content to know so much as may make us *good*, and always labour to be more *good*, than *knowing*: So shall we be sure after *Death*, to know all that is *needful* to make us *happy*, and *happier* we shall then be, than now we can know or understand.

From what hath been now said of the *much differing States* of these two Persons after *Death*, we learn how to Answer that *Question*, which was before propounded, and hitherto *referr'd*, viz. *How it can be consistent with the good Providence and righteous Government of God, to suffer Good*

Good Men to be in much Affliction upon Earth, whilst the Wicked prosper?

That it is often so, it cannot be denied; tho' it may be, it is not by far so *common* a thing, as we are apt to imagine it. Many, who seem to us very *pious Men*, are yet no better than *cunning Hypocrites*; and whilst *these*, whose false Hearts God seeth into, are *justly plagu'd* by him for their *Hypocrisy*; we, who judge by *Outward Appearances*, are apt to think that in Afflicting *them*, he Afflicts *Good Men*. On the other side there may be many whom we esteem *evil Men*, who are not so in God's Account. Their *special Calling* or *Station* in the World is such, as necessarily engageth them to bestow most of their *time*, and *study* on *secular Affairs*, whether they be more *publick* or *private*. There is also a *State* to be taken upon themselves by some in regard to their *Office*, and a *distance* to be kept by them from other Men of an *inferior order*. And for this, we are too apt to look upon them with an *evil* and *envious Eye*, and they seem to us (only thro' our own *earthly mindedness*, *Pride*, and *Impatience* of seeing any either *over* us, or *above* us) to be *Worldly*, and *Ambitious*, and too much intent upon their own *selfish Interest*: Some again are as *Modest*, as they are *Good*, and have more of the *Heart*, than *Face of Religion*; and know not how to *force* their *Humility* into such an *Outside*, and *Ostentatious shew* of *Piety* and *Zeal*, as *others*, who have far less of it, can do. If such Men as these *thrive* and *prosper*, we are apt to say, that *Evil Men* are exalted, and *Good Men* neglected. And whilst upon *these*, or *other* such *mistakes*, we judge rashly of others, we cannot stop there; but are apt also to fly in the Face of *Providence*, as tho'

God

God could have no hand in ordering things, if we cannot make all that comes to pass in the World to suit with our own *Humours* and *Tempers*, which we have persuaded our selves to believe very *Good* and *Religious*.

Besides, it ought to be consider'd, that we are apt to judge too rashly of Men's *Condition* in this World, as well as of their *Piety* and *Goodness*. That *Condition* is certainly *Best* and *Happiest*, which yields a Man most *inward Peace*, *Quiet*, and *Satisfaction* of Mind. And Men of a moderate *Fortune*, and *middle State*, have commonly most of these, and I think it is as easy to observe, that *serious* and *sober Piety* is more easy to be met with among this *middle sort* of People; than in either of the *extreams*. These are the Men that are most properly said to *thrive* and *prosper*, and these are commonly the *best Men*, and have the least of any sort either of *Sin*, or of *Trouble*, being content with their moderate *Portion*; and just, and kind to their Neighbours; and of a *peaceable*, and *loving Temper*, having a most high *Veneration* for the *Divine Majesty*, and an earnest desire to do good in their Generation, to live cheerfully on a *Competence* at Home, and peaceably among their Neighbours Abroad, obediently to good *Laws*, serviceable to their *Country*, and submissively to *Divine Providence*; God usually blesteth them with their own desires, and upholds them in that *indifferent State*, wherein is the greatest *Worldly Happiness*.

And yet tho' the *Supposition*, whereon this evil against *Providence* is grounded, be not so *universally true*, as it is commonly taken to be; for it is not true, that it is either *always*, or *lastest* thus with good and bad Men, as it is supposed.

posed to be by the Disputers against *Providence* : Yet must we grant, that not only *sometimes*, but *very often* it is, and in all Ages hath been so. On this very *Supposition* the design of this *Parable* is founded. The *Wicked Man* here is a *Rich Man*, who hath a great deal more than enough. And the *Good Man* is *very Poor*, and wants of his own whereon to Live. The *Former* is supposed to live in *Health*, and to have so *strong* a *Constitution* of Body, as to *rejoice* in his *Wealth*, and to hold out in all his *Excess* and *Intemperance*; and the *Good Man* is as destitute of *Health*, as of *Riches*; and had a Body as full of *Sores*, as his Purse was empty of *Money*, or his Belly of *Meat*. Probable it is also, that the *Rich Man* was had in *Honour*, and greatly *reverenc'd* by his poorer *Neighbours*; that he had *great Acquaintance*, and many *Visitants*, who were his frequent *Guests*, making merry with him, and *praising*, with much flattery, his *Hospitality*, and Noble way of *Living*, and magnifying his *sumptuous Fare*; whilst *Good Lazarus* lay *disregarded*, *scorn'd*, and *despis'd* by almost every one, as a *vile* and *despicable* Creature, not fit to be taken Notice of, or vouchsafed a *pitiful look* by them that pass'd in and out through the *Rich Man's Gate*. The poor is hated even of his *Neighbour*, but the *Rich* hath many *Friends*. Prov. 14. 20. *All the Brethren of the Poor do hate him, how much more do his Friends go far from him? He pursueth them with Words, but they are wanting to him.* Prov. 19. 7, 8.

Thus it often comes to pass at this day, and thus it hath been in all Ages of the World. *Righteous Abel* could not by his *Righteousness* escape, but for it fell a *Sacrifice* to the *Envy* and *Hatred* of his *wicked Brother Cain*. And this is a thing

thing which the Devil hath taught the World to make a very ill use of, both for the *hardening* of the *prosperous Sinner* in his Wickedness, and for the *weakening* the Faith of good Men in their Afflictions; of tempting some to deny the Providence and Righteous Government of God, and even very good Men, at sometimes, to doubt of it. Because they, that is, the Wicked, who live in a constant Prosperity, have no changes, therefore they fear not God, Psal. 55. 19. Let favour be shew'n to the Wicked, yet will he not learn Righteousness, in the Land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the Majesty of the Lord. Isai. 26. 10. Because Sentence against an evil Work is not speedily executed, therefore the Heart of the Sons of Men is fully set in them to do Evil Eccl. 8. 11. Because Moab had been at ease from his Youth, and he hath settled on his Lees, and hath not been emptied from Vessel to Vessel, neither hath he gone into Captivity; therefore his Taste remain'd in him, and his Scent is not chang'd. Jer. 48. 11. These Things hast thou done, and I kept silence, (saith God to the Wicked) Thou thought'st that I was altogether such an one as thy Self. Psal. 50. 21. They are not in trouble as other Men, neither are they plagu'd like other Men; therefore Pride compasseth them about as a Chain, Violence covereth them as a Garment. Their Eyes stand out with fatness, they have more than Heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly, concerning Oppression, they speak loftily. They set their Mouth against the Heavens, they say, How doth God know? And is there Knowledge in the most High? Behold these are the Ungodly, that prosper in the World, they increase in Riches, Psal. 73. 4. &c. Thus the thriving Sinner encourageth himself in his prosperous Wickedness, and grows daring enough

enough to deny the Providence of God. *They slay the Widow and the Stranger, and murder the Fatherless; yet they say, the LORD doth not see it, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Psal. 94. 6, 7. He hath said in his Heart, God hath forgotten, he hideth his Face, he will never see it. Psal. 10. 11. Behold they belch out with their Mouths, Swords are in their Lips, for who (say they) doth bear? Psal. 59. 7. They encourage themselves in an evil Matter, they commune of laying Snares privily, they say, who shall see them? Psal. 64. 5. Eliphaz understood well enough all this, when he charged holy Job with it. Thou say'st (saith he to that good Man) How doth God know? And can he judge through the dark Cloud? Thick Clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not, and he walketh in the Circuit of Heaven. Job. 22. 13, 14. Because the Wicked prosper, They say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what Profit shall we have if we pray unto him? Job 21.*

And not only the Wicked, but even good Men, have been sometimes tempted to think hardly of God. Holy Job seems to have been a little disturbed in his mind on this account. *Wherefore do the Wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their Seed is Establish'd in their sight with them, and their Off-spring before their Eyes. Their Houses are safe from fear, neither is the Rod of God upon them. Their Bull gendereth and faileth not; their Cow calveth, and casteth not her Calf. They send forth their little ones like a Flock, and their Children dance. They take the Timbrel and Harp, and rejoice at the sound of the Organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the Grave,*

Grave, Job 21. 7. *My Soul is weary of my Life.*
 Job 10. 1. *Is it good for thee, that thou shouldst oppress;*
that thou shouldst despise the Work of thine hands, and
shine upon the counsel of the wicked, v. 3. Wherefore
(saith Jeremy) doth the way of the wicked prosper?
Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treache-
rously? Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken
root; they grow; yea, they bring forth Fruit, thou art
near in their Mouth, but far from their Reins. Jer.
 12. 1. *The devout Psalmist confesseth his own*
weakness in this case. Psal. 73. 2. As for me, my
Feet were almost gone, my Steps had well nigh slipped.
For I was envious at the Foolish, when I saw the Pro-
sperity of the Wicked. And v. 13. he cries out, Ve-
rily I have cleans'd my Heart in vain, and washed
my Hands in Innocence. For all the Day long have
I been plagued, and chastened every Morning. Thus
also the Prophet Habakkuk, c. 1. 13. Seeing God
so prospered the Idolatrous Chaldeans against Is-
rael, expostulates with God. Wherefore lookest
thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest
thy Tongue, when the Wicked devoureth the Man that
is more righteous than he? And makest Men as the
Fishes of the Sea, as the creeping Things that have no
Ruler over them? They take up all with the Angle,
they catch them in their Net, and gather them in
their Drag, therefore they rejoyce, and are glad.
Therefore they sacrifice to their Net, and burn incense
unto their Drag, because by them their Portion is fat,
and their Meat plenteous. And so again Job, Job
 12. 6. *The Tabernacles of the Robbers prosper, and*
they that provoke God are secure, into whose Hand
God bringeth abundantly. To the Jews this was a
mighty temptation always, and is to this day.
 Mal. 2. 17. *Ye say, every one that doth evil is good*
in the sight of the Lord; and he delighteth in them :

or where is the God of Judgment? And Ch. 3. 14. Ye have said, It is vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his Ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts? And now we call the Proud happy, and they that work Wickedness are set up, yea, they that tempt God, are even delivered.

What now shall we say to all this? Shall we deny what the holy Scripture, as well as Reason, doth assert as strongly, as that there is a God, That God governs the World in righteousness; and that only because there be some things in God's Government, whereof we know not the reason? Can God do nothing becoming his Divine Wisdom and Goodness, but what we must needs have understanding enough clearly to comprehend, and to give a rational account of, such as shall satisfy all pretenders to reason? Certainly the Works of God, as well as his Nature, may be too mysterious for our short Understandings to dive into the bottom of; and he may be wise, and righteous, tho' his Judgments to us are wonderful, and his ways past finding out. He may have very good Reasons for what he doth, tho' we have nor the Wis to discern them. However, what Abraham here minds the Rich Man of, is enough of it self to answer all that can be on this account objected against the good Providence of God. But now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. All the time of Life was the time of Service. Now, that is, after Death is the time of rewarding. Now in this Life we are but Sowing, then in the other Life we must Reap. We are here but Pilgrims, and Travellers, and Seekers; then, after Death hath he called us hence shall we be at Home, at Rest, and in possession of what we seek. Here we are Probati-

*oners for a better state hereafter ; we are a perfect-
 ing Holiness in the fear of the Lord, that we may
 be meet for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light.
 We are now at School, and under discipline, and
 as we improve, we shall be advanc'd. Our Hea-
 venly Father knows what we most need, and what
 will best fit us for the Inheritance which he hath
 provided for us ; and such is his goodness, that he
 doth always what's best, tho' we, like foolish Chil-
 dren, do not think so. We are not therefore to
 look only on the present, but much more on that
 which is to come. VVere the time of this Life all
 that God had made us for, our Condition in this
 Life were all that we should be concern'd for. But
 if there be a Life to come design'd us by God, and
 he hath made that the end of our present Life
 here, when we are to expect our Reward or Pu-
 nishment ; in that Life, must needs be the Revela-
 tion of the Righteous Judgment of God. Rom. 2.
 And then he will make it appear, whatever we
 foolish Men now think, that he order'd all
 Things wisely in this World. We are to judge of
 nothing before the end come, the methods of
 God's Providence, how unaccountable soever they
 now may seem, will then be laid open, so as fully
 to satisfie us of the Justice and Wisdom and Good-
 ness of all his Doings. He that hath now given
 us Laws to live by, hath appointed a Day, wherein
 he will Judge the World in Righteousness and
 will render to every one according to his Works. To
 them, who by patient continuance in well doings (how
 much soever their patience is now tried by the
 Evils they suffer, whilst they are doing well) seek
 for Glory and Honour and Immortality, eternal Life.
 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey
 the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness, how much
 soever*

foever they now thrive and flourish) indignation and wrath. Rom. 2. 6. Thus the devout Psalmist overcame all the Difficulties of reconciling the good Providence of God with the present Prosperity of the Wicked, and the Sufferings of the Righteous, when I thought to know this (saith he) it was too painful to me, until I went into the Sanctuary of God, then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places, thou castedst them down to destruction. How are they brought into desolation as in a moment? They are utterly consumed with Terrors. Psal. 73. 16. The Lord shall laugh at him, for he seeth that his Day is coming. Psal. 37. 19. I have seen (saith he) the Wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green Bay Tree. Yet he passed away, and lo he was not; I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect Man, and behold the Upright; for the End of that Man is Peace. But the Transgressors shall be destroy'd together, the End of the Wicked shall be cut off. v. 35. &c. The Wicked (saith Job) is reserv'd to the Day of Destruction, they shall be brought forth to the Day of Wrath. Job 21. 30. The Lord knoweth (saith St. Peter) how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punish'd. 1 Pet. 2. 9.

If then this present Life be no other than a time of Probation and Trial, of Service and Exercise, Duty and Discipline: and a Day of Judgment be appointed after death, when we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, and shall have then the final Sentence given upon us, to receive Reward or Punishment, according to the Works, which here we have done, whether good or evil: and if wicked Men, the more good Things they here enjoy and abuse, shall then suffer so much

the *severer Torments*; and *good Men* the *more evils* they here *suffer*, shall have so much the *greater Reward*, and share in *glory*, and if all that the *Wicked* can now enjoy be but for this *short Life*, which is but for a very few *Years* at most, and the *Torments* that follow shall be *eternal*; and what the *good Man* suffers is but for a *moment*, and yet in that moment through *grace* and *mercy* of God, *worketh* for him a *far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, what can any one that considers this, have left him to say against the *good Providence* and *righteous Government* of God, tho' he suffer the *Wicked* to flourish, and the *Righteous* to lie under *Afflictions* so long as they live in this *World*? In short, *all Things work together for good to them that love God*. Rom. 8. And tho' their *Sufferings* for a time be *grievous*, yet will they bring forth in the end the *comfortable Fruit* of *Righteousness* to them who are exercis'd therewith.

LUKE

LUKE XVI. Ver. 26.

And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

THIS Verse concludes the Answer which *Abraham* made to the *Rich Man's* Request, which he made for *himself* now in *Hell*. He denied him the Thing he ask'd of him, that is, to send *Lazarus* to cool his Tongue. And in these words he gives him a Reason for it, which must be satisfactory, the Thing desir'd is a Thing impossible to be done; how little soever it amounted to, or how willing soever *Abraham* might be to do it for him, yet was it not in *his power* to do it. *Abraham* had, in the immediately foregoing Words, put him in mind how little he had by his Behaviour in his *Life-time* deserved the favour he now requested. He bids him remember, how he had then demean'd himself, and how he had then receiv'd a great deal more than he had deserv'd, and indeed all the good Things that fell to his share, no more good is now therefore to be expected by him. And yet, left after all this, the *Rich Man* might conceive somekind of hope, that notwithstanding his great demerit, he might by much importunity yet prevail, and move Father

Abraham to have some compassion on him; he tells him very plainly, that 'tis to no purpose to hope for any such thing as he desir'd. As he was already tormented, so tormented he must for ever be.

They who live *wickedly*, and die *impenitently*, are at Death put into a *desperate Condition*, past all *hope of receiving any relief or abatement of their Torments*.

This appears abundantly from this part of *Abraham's Answer*. Besides all this, saith he. Over and above what I have yet said to make thee sensible of thy *Folly*, and of the *Justice of God* in thus giving thee up to be tormented, I have this moreover to add for the *aggravation of thy Misery*, That thou canst not now have any *help or ease* given thee by *me* or any other. For between *us*, who are here comforted, and *you*, who are there tormented, there is a great gulf, an unpassable distance, no way left to pass over. This gulf is fixed unalterably. The immutable decree of God is this, that there shall be no way whereby one of *us*, who are thus once separated, shall ever any more come at the other. So that they that would pass from hence to you, cannot. That is, supposing that any of us, who here through the special grace and mercy of God in JESUS Christ our Saviour, are here in a most comfortable rest, have a mind, or shall be willing in compassion to you, who are in Torment, to deny our selves so far for your sakes, as to leave this comfortable state for a while, to bring you all the relief and ease you desire; yet you must know, that we are restrain'd herein by God, he will by no means allow of it. And if any one of You would never so fain break loose from that wretched Society,

and

and get out of his *Torments*, yet he is so fast chain'd to that *Misery* wherein he lies, that he can never regain his Liberty, neither can he ever Taste of the happy Condition we are in; he can never obtain any the least share in our *Comfort*. God hath determined otherwise, and therefore, *where* thou art, and *as* thou art *there*, and *so* art thou like to abide, till the great Day of *Judgment* come, when, whatsoever *change* there shall be made, either of the *Place* or *Torments*, it shall be much for the worse.

Let us therefore consider this in time; before the Consideration of it will do us no more good than to make our *Torments* intolerable. Let us repent whilst we may. Now, in our *Life Time* there is place for *hope*, but after *Death*, we shall be wholly swallow'd up of *despair*. Now, our state is *changeable*, and we are invited, and even *bribed*, if I may so say, by a Thousand *Tenders* and *Promises* of all good Things, if we will turn and repent. But after death our state will be *unchangeable* as to the kind howsoever it shall alter as to *degrees*, either of *blessedness* or *misery*. When we are once in *Abraham's Bosom*, we can never be *miserable* any more, how much *happier* soever we may be; and they that are once in *Hell* and in *Torments*, must be so for ever; how much *deeper* soever they may sink into *Hell*, and how much soever their *Torments* may *encrease*. Now we may, but then, we cannot repent to any purpose. Now let us seek the Lord whilst he may be found, for then will his Face be hid everlastingly from us. Then neither *Abraham* nor *Lazarus*, nor all the *Saints* in *Heaven* can make us any help.

And would it not be very strange now, if what Father *Abraham* could not do, every *Mass-Priest* on Earth should have a power given him to do? Looks it not a little odly, I say, that a *Sinful-Priest* laden with *Sins*, and *hired* to the Work with a little *Money*, should prevail for *Ease* and *Refreshment* for a poor *Soul* tormented after *Death*, when the *Father of the Faithful*, and the *Friend of God*, durst not engage himself in so difficult a Task? How hard a thing must we needs find it after this to believe, that the *Saints in Heaven* (and such it may be some of them as have no other *Sanctity*, than what *wicked Men* have given them) should be ready whenever we *pray* to them for our dead *Friends*, to procure them the *Refreshment* we desire for them, and to set them at liberty out of their *Prison*, free them from all their *Torments*, and convey them into *Abraham's Bosom*; when the great *Father* of these *Saints* could not be entreated by the *Prayer* of his *Son* so much as to *intercede* for him; but told him plainly, it was a thing out of his *power* to do; and farther assured him, that whosoever was once got into that dark *Prison*, must never hope to come out again.

We do not find it Recorded in Holy *Scripture*, that ever any *Prayer* was made to any of the *Saints* in Heaven, besides this only, which the *Rich Man in Hell* is here suppos'd to have made unto *Abraham*. And if this be esteem'd by any one a fit Example for him to imitate, I would fain know of him what reason he has for it, or where the *Encouragement* lieth; for my part I cannot find it, seeing we are here told he *pray'd* in vain, and got nothing by his *Prayer*, but this only,

only, an *Assurance* that it would be to *no purpose* to pray *so* again.

Indeed, we have no warrant at all from *God*, to believe, that either their *own Prayers*, or *ours* for *them*, can do those any good, who are once in *torments* after Death. But blessed be *God*, we are told to our comfort, That we have, whilst we live, a very powerful *Advocate at God's Right Hand*, making *Intercession* for us ; by *Him*, therefore, the *only Mediator between God and Men*, let us make our humble Approaches, and present our Petitions unto the *Father*, praying, in his *Name*, who is the *Propitiation for our Sins*, both for our Selves, and for all Men living upon Earth ; and we need not fear, but for his sake, we shall have vouchsafed unto us a *most Gracious Audience*.

LUKE

LUKE XVI 27, 28.

Then he said, I pray thee therefore Father, that thou wouldst send him to my Father's House.

For I have five Brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of Torments.

IN the five following Verses of this Parable, we have a second Petition, made by the Rich Man unto Abraham, after the former was denied. He had first begg'd some little Ease and Refreshment for himself, but could not prevail. Now he supplicates in behalf of his five surviving Brethren. Seeing his own condition could not be better'd, he will try what he can do to keep his Brethren from coming into it. These we have in the two Verses now read; and in those which follow, Abraham's Answer to this new Request, and some farther Discourse thence occasion'd between him, and his Petitioner.

The Rich Man is suppos'd to have left behind him when he died, five Brethren, all living in his Father's House. And if Lazarus may not be sent to comfort him in Hell; yet, he hopes he may get leave to go to his Father's House, to testify to these his Brethren, in what a sad condition he now lay, and to warn them to take heed how

now

now they behav'd themselves, lest, when they died, they shou'd become as miserable as he was.

The things which are most observable in this new Petition of this *Rich Man* in *Hell*, are these,

Seeing that this *wicked Man*, now in *torments*, is here represented to us, Petitioning *Abraham*, that some means may be us'd to prevent his *five Brethren's* coming into the same deplorable and desperate condition. It hence follows,

First, That these *five Brethren* of his, whom he had left behind him alive, were *wicked Men*, like himself; for thence ariseth his *fear* for them, lest they should come into the same *place of Torments*. However, foolish Sinners judge now very favourably of the *sinful ways* they walk in, that there is no great *hurt* in them; all that can be said against their voluptuous Courses, cannot bring them out of love with them, or persuade them of any dangers they are in by reason of them; yet, will the *torments* of *Hell* awaken 'em, and then they will judge otherwise of those pleasant ways than formerly they had done, and will be made to confess the evil of them, and that they are no other but the way to Destruction. Indeed, they who have given themselves up to live by *Sense*, and not by *Reason*, are not to be convinc'd of the Evil they are drawing down upon themselves, by *Reason*, but by *Feeling* only. *Experience* will convince, when nothing else will; and *Fools* are rarely convinc'd of their folly but by experience, which makes them smart for it; and the feeling of torments brings them to their Wits, when it is too late to grow Wiser.

Secondly,

Secondly, That these *five Brethren* being at Home together in their *Father's House*, and living there *wickedly* together, is an Argument of a *wicked Family*; wherein there was no fear of God, nor any thing of Religion practised or taught. The *Rich Man* desires that *Lazarus* might be sent to his *Father's House* or *Family*. Now had that *House* or *Family* been well Instructed, disciplin'd and govern'd, as *Father Abraham* took care that his should be, *Commanding his Children*, and his *Houhold* after him, that they might keep the way of the Lord; as God himself testifies of him, *Gen. 16.* Had the *Children* of the *Rich Man's Father* been by him (as the *Apostle* orders all Parents to deal with their Children, *Eph. 5.*) brought up in the nourture and admonition of the Lord, it is probable that we should have heard of some one or other *Vertuous* and *Religious* Person in so numerous a Family. For tho' some might miscarry under the best sort of Education, yet is it hardly conceiveable, that in a *Religiously* ordered Family, of *Six Sons* there should not one prove a *Good Man*. Had the *Father* taken care to have the *Scriptures* daily Read, and to see the whole Family duly Catechized, and to set up a constant course of *Worshiping God* in his House, using the *Authority* which God had given him over every Member therein, to command at least an *Outward Conformity* in all good things, and suffering no *Disobedient* Person to abide under his Roof, it is very probable, that God would have blessed his pious care with better success, and that one, at least of *six*, would have been well season'd with the Principles of *Piety* and *Goodness*. Wherever these things are neglected, it is certain, that some one at least of the Family is *wicked*,

ed, and then it is no great wonder if all the rest, one after another, take the infection, and follow the ill Example.

Families void of Religion are the Nurseries of Hell; for in such Families all the care that is taken, is only for the World, and the Flesh; and Children are taught nothing else but fashionable Sins, and how to fit themselves with a great deal of formality and modestness for eternal destruction: They are instructed very carefully, even for good manners sake, to practise immorality; and either by no breeding, or that which is called good breeding, to make sure that they miss not their way to Hell. One would think, that once reading of this Parable, tho' no other part of Scripture were ever read, in such Families, should make them a little afraid to live so brutishly, as many do; as if, who ever else had a concern in the house, God had nothing to do there. To hear how the Rich-man in torments cried out to have his Brethren in his Father's house better instructed, and all to prevent their being at last tormented with him, should, in all reason, move such Families to endeavour a seasonable Reformation; and, indeed, should be in effect, the very same thing to them, as tho' one rose again from the Dead to testify unto them.

2. From this, That the wicked Man in Hell requests a kindness to be shew'd to his surviving Brethren upon Earth, it may not improbably be inferr'd, That wicked Men in Torments may wish well, and bear some Good Will to their Friends whom they have left behind them. The Rich Man is represented as one not a little concern'd for his Brethren, and afraid lest they should at last be in as sad a condition as himself. I shall not dare positively to say, what kind of Affection it is,

it, that such *wretched Souls* can have for any one; because it is a thing no where *clearly reveal'd* unto us. This portion of *Scripture*, which we are now considering, is a *Parable*, and no *History*. And the *Persons* here made use of, are represented to us, as tho' we saw them in the same condition here spoken of; and heard them so discoursing one with another, and desiring such things of, or for one another, as we think that we our selves, were we in their case, would do; considering the *Affections* that now we feel in our selves. And therefore of this matter I shall dare to say no more but this.

First, That they who are in *Hell*, can have no such thing in them as the *Grace of Christian Charity*. For that is the most excellent of all *Christian Graces*, which no Man can have, and go to *Hell*. To love Men, even all Men, for *God's sake*; and because of *God's Image*, and heartily to wish 'em, tho' they be our *Enemies*, as *Well* and *Happy*, as we wish our selves; to desire that all Men may be *Good*, and more like unto *God*, that they may be for ever *blessed*; is, that which no Man can do, but he that loves *God* and *Goodness* first; and who doth so, is a very good Man, and cannot be tormented in *Hell*.

Secondly, I know nothing to the contrary, but that a Man in *Hell* may still have a *natural Affection* and *kindness* for some, especially his *near Relations*, and once *dear Friends* on Earth. And thus I am sure the *Rich Man* in *Hell* is here represented to us by our blessed *Saviour*, as having a *kindness* for his *five Brethren*, who were yet living in his *Father's House*. Only we are not told either, *First*, That this *kindness* of his extended any farther, than to *them* of his *Father's House*. We
can-

cannot therefore tell, whether he wish'd as well to any *others*, whether *Good* or *Bad*, as he did to *them*. And I cannot think it incredible, that a *wicked Man*, who, how wicked soever he may otherwise be suppos'd to have been, had, when living, a *natural Affection* for some of his *nearest kindred*, should have the same *Affection* for them in *Hell*. It is certain that some of the *wicked* Persons alive are not without such an *Affection* for their *kindred*; yea, and are most *unreasonably fond* of them to a *Sin*; to that height of *fondness*, which no *good Man* dares cherish in himself; and then, why may they not have so much kindness for them still after *Death*, as to wish they may never come into the place of *torments*? And yet. Secondly, we are not inform'd, whether or no this *Affection* of his for them, arose from the *natural relation* they had to one another as *Brethren*, Children of the *same Father*; or rather from their *likeness* of *Temper* and *Humour*, so that he lov'd them, and wish'd them well, rather because they were his *Brethren in Iniquity*, and his *Companions in Sin*, and the only Persons on that account in whom he could delight. Their *Education*, and their *natural Temper* was much the *same*; and they had rejoyc'd whilst they liv'd together, in one another's *Company*, and *Fellowship*, in all *sinful courses*. And if so, why might he not now wish for *them*, at least so much good, as that they might never come into the *Torments*, which he now endured? Lastly, it is not certain, whether this his Request for his *Brethren* was made in *kindness* to *them*, or rather to *himself* only. His seeming concern and care for *their safety*, might possibly be in truth nothing else but a fearful apprehension of *greater Torments* which

which he *himself* should feel, if *they* were sent to be tormented with him. He and *they* had been a long time, it may be, *Confederates in Sin*. They had *enticed*, and *persuaded* one another to it, they had *encourag'd* one another in it, they had *mutually contributed* as much as they could to each others sinful delights, they had *help'd* one another to drive away the *melancholy Thoughts* of future *Torments*, and *binder'd* one another from hearkening to good *Advice*, and from entertaining any fear of *Judgment* to come, and of being call'd to an account, they had *help'd* one another to laugh the good *Man* out of countenance, and to make sport with the *Preacher*, that call'd on them to *repent*; to drive away the *Thoughts of Repentance*, and to *despise* every thing that tended to draw 'em off from a Life of *Pleasure* and *Follity*. To see these dear Friends of his, or rather of his *Sin*, come into the same place of *Torments*, must needs many ways *aggravate* his own *Sufferings*, had he *really* any *love* to *them*? This must add to his *Torments*, to see *those* whom he loved *tormented* with him. Was it only *Self-love* which made him so careful to prevent their being tormented with him? There was reason for it, to see them *tormented* with him, who might, it may be, have *escaped* those *Torments*, had they not been *tempted* by him to venture upon them, to be thus made *sensible* of that *Sin*, and it's ill *Effects*, which had been so much his *delight*, as not only *doing evil Things himself*, but *taking pleasure in them that did them*; to hear them *curse* him for his former *kindness*, and *curse* the day that he became their *Brother*, or that they ever kept him *Company* upon; this must needs make *their Torments* his own, seeing their *Sins* had been, in a great measure,

sure his own too. I should think it the less strange, that Men in Hell should have a natural kindness for their Kindred and old Companions, even on this account, that such an Affection is sure to torment them; and the more of their old Friends come to be tormented, the more still are their own Torments exasperated; and all this is very just and equal, and how much soever their Torments grow upon them, they amount to no more at last, than what they took much pains whilst they lived to provide for themselves.

Call it then what you please in the Rich Man now in Hell, that he prayeth unto Abraham in behalf of his five surviving Brethren; I am sure, 'tis that which ought to make all wicked Men now living, who follow his way of Life, to blush and hang down their Heads for shame. What a Reproach is this to our Debauchees and Debauchers, whose great Pride and Glory it is to corrupt others, and to be corrupted by them; That a wretched Soul in the Torments of Hell, should have either more good nature, or more Sense of his own good, than they can be persuaded to have? Upon what Consideration soever it was, the Rich Man in Torments is here represented, as one desirous that his Brethren might fare better in the end, than he did. How many Thousands are there now living, that have no such regard to the Welfare of their Brethren? This looks, as tho' one might learn of the Devils in Hell, to be a better Christian, at least, to have more Humanity and good nature, than they can learn by all the means of Learning, which are now in much mercy afforded them in their Life-time. He would fain have his Brethren to be sav'd, yea, to repent, and change their present course of Life, that they might be sav'd.

How many now amongst us delight in nothing more, than to see their Brethren sin, and to persuade them to sin, that they may be damned? Rather than they shall be saved; and kept out of that place of Torments, which we endeavour by all means to make sure to our selves; we will not stick to take the Devils Office, and Work, out of his Hand, and go about daily tempting them to do evil. We are resolved to haunt them like evil Spirits, where ever they go; and to make them weary of their Lives, if they will not accompany us in our Excesss of Riot, and murder themselves, Souls and Bodies to comply with our Humours. Rather than they shall repent, and be saved, we will jeeze them out of the Thoughts of them, and laugh them into perfect madness if it be possible; rather than they should get into the way to Heaven; we'll set all our Wits on work, and use all the Arts that the Devil hath taught us, either to draw or drive them into the broad way to destruction. So we may but have their Company to Hell, we'll pay the Reckoning for them all the way, and all we can there too. O send, good Father Abraham, send away Lazarus to my poor Brethren, to keep them out of this Place. So the Rich Man in Hell. If there be no Remedy, but I must lie here in Torments, despairing of ease; O let not those poor Men come and lie here too. If there be no mercy behind for me, yet there may be for them, who are yet alive, and may be some way or other brought to Faith and Repentance. But what say we? What pity and compassion have we (good and loving Neighbours as we call our selves) for one another? We send, and if that will not do, we go; and with all possible Earnestness, impatient of any denial or Excuse, we call out

out and invite, and use what *Arts* we can, even to force our kind and loving Neighbours to go the very same way, that the *Rich Man* went to *Hell*. O what *courtship*, what earnest *entreating*, how many *Arguments* craftily contrived, how many *fair and wheedling Words* used, to no better end, but to entice our *Kindred and Relations*, our *Neighbours and Friends* to go along with us, to make themselves sick, to waste their precious time, to make *Beasts of themselves*, and *Beggars* of their *Families*, to spend their *Money* and their *Credit*, of either whereof they have too little to be prodigal of; and finally, to ruin themselves eternally by thus losing themselves in *Frolick and Vanity*, till they know not where to find themselves again. What's all this for, but to prevent all *Thoughts of Repentance*, or of the danger of falling into *Hell*; that if it be possible, they may never either fear it, or so much as think of it till they see it? Yea, how *angry* are we to be denied this piece of *Neighbourly Love, Civility and Kindness*? What *Sport* are we wont to make our Selves, and our Company, when we are met to *undo* our Selves, with any one that was afraid to be as mad as we, and denied to go to *Hell* with us to please and humour us?

3. The means which this tormented Sinner desires may be made use of to keep his five Brethren from being tormented in *Hell*, is this, That *Lazarus* may be sent to testify unto them. No way could he think on, which was more likely to work upon them as he desired, than this. And that he had a very great Opinion of this contrivance of his, appears sufficiently from the following Discourse. He is made here to speak, as one who is very confident, that this, rather than any

any other way of dealing with them, would prove effectual. It is now here to be supposed, That this rich Gentleman is represented as one, that now considered of what mind *himself* had always been, and of the same he thought his *Brethren* yet were. He knew that the main thing, which had so long kept both *himself* and *them* from Repentance, was their *infidelity*, their want of *Abraham's faith*, and their not giving credit to the Word of God; and that they had been so fond of their sinful pleasures, that they could not for *them*, get time and freedom of mind enough, to think of what Concernment the things commended to their *faith* were, or what reason they had to believe them. O, therefore (saith he) send Lazarus that he may testify unto them; to be a Witness unto them of the truth of those Scriptures they have so often heard read; to assure them by the experience which *himself* now hath, and by what he hath seen here, and I sadly feel, that the things which they have been told concerning a two-fold future state of Souls after death are all true. Lazarus, whom they once knew alive, and whom they know to be since dead, appearing unto them after death, will startle and awake them to consider the things, which they have hitherto slighted as fables; good Father send him to this purpose unto them, and let them not perish for want of so convincing a testimony, as he is able now to give them of these things. Observe here

First, That want of Faith, not believing the Word of God which he hath given us on purpose to inform and direct us, both what to do now, and what to hope for or expect hereafter, is one great cause, (and indeed the most in general) why

why Men hold on so *boldly* in their *wicked ways*, and run so *merrily* towards *Hell*. God hath not in any Age of the World been wanting to us, in this Matter, but hath always, one way or other, given us both *Instruction* enough in our *Duty*, and *Encouragement* enough to do it. He hath afforded us *means*, such as he knows *sufficient* for the *Conviction* and *Persuasion* of *Rational* Creatures, such as he hath made *us*, and he expects from us, that we should not neglect those *means*, nor suffer our *Affections* and *Humours* to get so much the *Dominion* over our *Reason*, as to render it *useless* to us in the *great concerns* of our Souls. He that made us, as He alone can tell what he made us *for*, and will do with us; so He expects to be *hearken'd* to, and to be *believ'd*, *when* or *howsoever* he is pleased to acquaint us with these things; and that *believing* him, we should wholly apply our selves to the *practice* of those *Duties*, whereby he is pleased to be *honoured*, and to bring us to the *blessedness* which in his *goodness* he hath prepared for us. And did we indeed *believe* Him in all those things whereof he hath most graciously *inform'd* us, it seems hardly imaginable, that if nothing else would do it, yet *Self-love*, and *care* of our selves should not even *force* us with all *Thankfulness* to accept of, and with all cheerful *Industry* to observe the Rules of Life which he hath given us. And yet, alas, so it is; that either our *Worldly Business*, and continual *Drudgeries*, about *Earthly* and *Temporal* Concerns; or our *carpal Lusts* and *Pleasures* hold us so continually employ'd in the *Slavery* of the *Flesh*, that we hardly once in all our days (some of us) think of what God hath told us; we will hardly give our selves leave to *read* or *hear* them, and much less are we willing to

trouble our Heads so well and throughly to consider and meditate upon them, that they may affect and season our minds and hearts. This is evidently the root of our wickedness and impotence, that we do not believe what God hath told us.

Let us therefore take heed of unbelief. The things which God hath commended to our Faith, are no Trifles, but matters of the greatest weight, and such as may justly command our most serious thoughts as long as we live. They are things, on the belief whereof depends no less, than our eternal happiness; and all Men must grant, that nothing can more deserve our best consideration, than how we may be eternally happy, and escape becoming eternally miserable. The matters that God in his Word hath informed us of, and directed us about, are of no less moment than everlasting Joy, and everlasting Torment; and there's no Man in his right Wits, who can think these are things to be slighted and dalled with. One would think it worth any Man's chief care and pains (whatever else he may have to do) to consider, what reasons may be given for the belief or disbelief of things of this nature. Indeed, were the matters revealed unto us by God, things which could neither greatly profit nor hurt us, whether we believed them or no; how much soever the sense of God's Authority should sway us, yet we could not find any reason in the nature of things to be otherwise than very indifferent about them; whether they be true or false, we could not be greatly concerned to know it. But feeling they are such as hath been said, it can be no indifferent matter to any one that is not a fool or madman, which of them is like to fall to his share;

they) whether these things are true or false? Such things as these you tell us of, and it is no News to hear a great deal of talk about them, but, how can it be made unquestionably evident, that there are any such things? What Demonstrations can be given us of such a Being, as God? How can it be made undeniably evident, that the Scripture is the word of God? How can we be assured, that all is not a fiction and contrivance of crafty men to have their ends upon us? Till we can be assur'd of these things by some clearer evidence to assure us of the truth of what we are told concerning things to come, we think it not wisdom to forgo the things present. Why should we forbear to take our pleasure in this World, which now we Taste, and Feel, and See, and are sure of, in hope of that which no Man can assure us that we shall ever enjoy, or for fear of what, for ought we know, will never be.

This is the pretence for infidelity, and wickedness, and these are the questions and disputings not of Reason, but of Lust. How easily can such People believe, where they have a mind to believe, tho' the evidence they have, is not comparable to that they have in the matter now in hand? Where evidence is wanting, whether a thing be, or no; it must needs be as unreasonable, to believe without evidence, that it is not, as that it is. And yet these Men who pretend the want of evidence, pretend also to believe the things not to be, of the Being, or not Being, whereof, they say they can have no evidence. When, by this, is evident enough, that neither their belief, nor disbelief, is grounded on Reason, but only on Affection and Lust; whereby they are prejudic'd against the belief of what they love not, and therefore would not have to be true. They have ('tis plain)

no *reason* for their *unbelief*, but for want of *Reason* to alledge for the wicked courses they take, are forc'd to fly to a foolish *pretence*, for a colour of *Reason*. For why? If they shall *confess* that they *believe* these things, or look upon them as things *credible*; they must openly proclaim themselves *Fools*, for living as they do, and running wittingly on their own eternal Damnation. That therefore they may *Sin* on, and not seem to confess themselves *Fools*, and *Adamnen* for doing so, they have no other *shift* left, but a *pretence*, that they cannot *believe* for want of *evidence*. Let us have (say they) but a *clear demonstration* of the Truth, and we will believe it as well as others.

But, alas, whilst they would thus at once enjoy their Sins, and avoid the just imputation of Folly, they give all considering Men as plain a demonstration of their Folly as Men can do. They have *evidence* enough for *Faith*, if not for *Science*, and desiring more, they are just as reasonable as a *Blind-man*, who walking in a dangerous path, wherein if he go, he is told he shall shortly fall into a Pit, out of which he can never be taken alive; will walk on still, notwithstanding all that can be said or done to convince him, pretending he wants *evidence* enough of the truth of what is told him, because he *sees not* the Pit; and therefore he will not believe there is one, till some Body do, what none can do, let him *see* it. *Faith is the Evidence of Things not seen.* Heb. 11. 1. And Things not seen admit not of such *demonstrations* as these People call for. They would see what is not yet to be *seen*, before they come *thither*, where they may be *seen*. As tho' one would not believe there is such a place as *New-England*, when you have told him he is invited *thither*.

thither by a Friend to an Inheritance there left him, and may certainly have it, if he will believe and go for it. But whatever proof you give him of the truth you tell him, he puts all off with this, that it is no *demonstration*, for he sees no such Country. And who can be such a fool, as to imagine he should, till he have so much *faith* as to believe him that told him of it, so far at least, as to go *thither* where he may see it.

Well, but these *Masters of Reason* cannot be convinced, say what you will, till such Arguments be brought as shall *compel* their consent; that is, such as so *necessarily*, and *evidently* conclude the *Truths* commended to their belief; as that they can no longer deny their assenting to them; and nothing less than an *evident impossibility* that it should be otherwise, will serve their turn. And herein again is their *folly* manifested to all wise Men; for, upon the same account, they may as reasonably say, that they shall be no longer *masters of Reason*, should they believe themselves to be the Sons and Daughters of their own Parents; or that either their's, or any other's Estates, are their own rightful inheritance; for no such *reasons* can be produced to convince them of this, as will make it *evidently impossible* that it should be otherwise. But such Men have no mind to part with their *Estates*, because without them they could not live at the *sumptuous rate*, as now they do; and therefore they can believe them their own, without such *cogent Reasons*, as they think necessary to make them yield to be good.

It may be yet, that some of these *Infidels* may grant us thus much: That seeing *Faith* is the *substance of things hoped for*, Heb. 11. 1. and these things

things commended here in this Parable to our faith are things future, it may be unreasonable to expect an ocular demonstration of them. All therefore that they require is sufficient evidence, or such a testimony as is credible. This they pretend is yet wanting, and one from the dead, might it be obtained, would satisfy them, and nothing less will do it.

How little reason we have to believe, that such a Testimony as this would win belief among this incredulous sort of People, we shall see hereafter, when we come to Abraham's Answer. In the mean time let us take into our consideration a few things, which being well weighed, let us resolve to choose as wisely as we can for our selves, and as reason directs us to do in other cases; and I am confident it will appear, that we need no more testifying to the truth, than already we have; nor can, with reason, demand it.

First, Let us consider what was before said, That the things propounded to our faith, are things of the weightiest moment, whereof we cannot, with any safety, be ignorant, and the belief or disbelief whereof are of eternal Concernment. All comes to this, What shall become of us when we die? For die we must, and if there be any thing after death, for, or against, which we are whilst we live to prepare our selves, nothing can more concern us than to understand it. If it should please God that we die this Night, can we be unconcern'd, whether we shall be happy, or miserable, in Joy or in Torment to morrow, or whether we shall be insensible of any thing for ever? Can any thing in the World now so much concern us, as to be informed what we shall be eternally when we go hence.

Secondly,

Secondly, That as greatly as we are concern'd to understand this, yet, seeing it is a thing to come, and wholly in God's ordering, we cannot possibly understand it any other way than by *Divine Revelation*. For God alone can tell us what he will do with us, or what he hath prepar'd for us; none but *He* can reveal unto us things to come, and things which depend altogether on his own Will and Determination. Yet,

Thirdly, Such is the nature of God, and the nature of Man too, that when both are well considered, it appears very agreeable to both, and therefore is most probable, even tho' we had never had any such *Revelation* of it as now we have, that there shall be *Rewards* and *Punishments* for Men after Death, which they shall receive accordingly as they did behave themselves in this World. And therefore this hath been the general belief of Mankind, as was said before.

Lastly, Seeing then we have now in our Hands a *Book*, which is said to be written by those, who spake as they were inspir'd by the *Holy Ghost*, the *Spirit of Truth*; and therefore God hath made known to us all that, which may make us wise unto *Salvation*, thro' *Faith*, which is *Christ JESUS*; and seeing that most things herein reveal'd unto us are such as appear agreeable to our own natural *Sentiments* of *Good* and *Evil*; and this *Revelation* hath been so well confirm'd and attested to, that wheresoever it has come, the most learned and civiliz'd parts of the World have been convinc'd of the Truth of it; and the best Men have rather cholen to die, than to part with it. I would fain now know why this should not be enough to persuade any rational Man to believe, what if it be true, and he believes it not, he

he must certainly be *tormented* for evermore; and what tho' it were false, could do him no more hurt by his believing it, than the loss of some few *brutish Pleasures* for a very *short Life* on Earth amounts to, I hope every one will have the wit to judge it better for him, and a much wiser course to secure himself, and be safe at least from torments to all eternity; than to be merry only for a few days in this World, when after all his utmost care and endeavours, he cannot assure himself he shall be so any one day of his short Life. What need then can there be of sending one from the Dead to *testifie* unto reasonable Men, that it is best for them to take as much care of, and to provide as well for themselves, as 'tis possible for them to do? And may we not all do this, by living as we suppose we should Live, had we such a *Dead Man's Testimony*? Yea, are we not *Fools* if we do it not? Must one come from the Dead, to reach us so much wisdom as to do the best we can for our own safety? But of this *Testimony* of one from the dead, we shall hear again anon e're we have done with *Abraham's Answer* to this Request. Which let us now consider.

of Evidence thou mayst pretend, or they come plain of it is without cause. They have Answered, that is the Law which God by Moses gave them, with such Demonstration of the Divine Presence and Authority as never any Law before was given. They have the Prophecy, that is, the Books and Doctrine of those holy Men, whom God from of old time, as there was occasion either of **LUKE** *Enlargement, Correction, Warning, or better Information, sent into the World with Authority to interpret that Law, and resolve all Doubts about*

LUKE 16. v. 29.

Abraham said unto him, They have Moses, and the Prophets; let them hear them.

THe only proper means to bring Men out of all danger of Hell, and into the sure way to Heaven, is to hearken to, and obey the Word of God. The Rich-man in Hell would have had Lazarus sent to convince his Brethren by his Testimony. But Abraham would not be persuaded to take that course. *They have,* (saith he) *other means to make use of for their Conviction, such as God hath thought good to give them; they have Moses and the Prophets. These have already by God's order, and in his Name, testified unto them. If thy Brethren be not convinced, it is because they will not hear them. Whatever want of Evidence thou mayst pretend, or they complain of, it is without cause. They have Moses, that is, the Law which God by Moses gave them, with such Demonstrations of the Divine Presence and Authority, as never any Law besides was given. They have the Prophets, that is, the Books and Doctrine of those holy Men, whom God from time to time, as there was occasion either of Encouragement, Correction, Warning, or better Information, sent into the World, with Authority to interpret that Law, and resolve all Doubts about*

about it. These are *Witnesses* beyond all Exception; Men, who by the *holiness* of their *Lives*, by their *Courage* and *Patience*, by many *wonderful Works*, and by the *manifest truth* of their *Predictions*, have left you all without excuse. They have all that *God*, who best knows what's fit for *Men*, hath, in much *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, provided for their *Conviction* and *Conversion*. And *Men* must not expect, that *God* should be at their command, and minister just as they would have him to their *Humours* and *Phantasies*. It is enough, that *He* hath graciously provided for all their *Needs*. They need no more to convince them, than what they have in the *holy Scriptures* of *Moses* and the *Prophets*, let them but *hear*, and like *Men* of *Sense* and *Reason*, consider what they hear from *God* by them, and they will be ashamed to call for one from the *Dead* to testify unto them.

In this part of *Abraham's Answer* we may learn thus much.

First. That the *Scriptures* of the *Old Testament*, are confirm'd by the *Testimony* of those of the *New one*. If therefore we can find sufficient reason to believe the *Scripture* of the *New Testament* to have *Divine Authority*, we have also the same reason to believe as much of the *Scripture* of the *Old Testament*. Nay, we cannot believe the *New*, and disbelieve the *Old*, because the *New* bears witness of the *Old*. The *Writings* of the *Evangelists* and *Apostles* testify of the *Writings* of *Moses* and the *Prophets*.

It is true, indeed, That the *Scriptures* of the *Old Testament* are in many things out of date to us *Christians*, and, indeed, to all the *World*; but still they contain, never the less for that, *Divine Truth*. And tho' they do not now oblige *Men*

to obey all that was therein commanded, yet, do they oblige all who come to the knowledge of them, to believe all that is therein revealed. The *Levitical* or *Ceremonial*, and *Judicial* Laws therein Recorded, concern'd no other, but the People of *Israel*; nor have they any Obligation on other People; yet may it be very useful in divers respects, that we should know them. But all the *Moral* Laws, there given to the *Israelites*, concern *Mankind* in general, and therefore us *Christians*, as well as others. And the *historical* Relations are all of excellent Use to all Men, and some of them necessary to be known by all; to give us a right understanding of the *Original* of the *World*, the *Nature* of *Man*, the *Entrance* of *Sin*, and of all the *Evils* consequent to it, into the *World*; the wonderful *Methods* of *God's Providence*, and his astonishing *Goodness* in the promises of mercy, and the *restoration* of fallen *Man*; his *especial* care of his *Church*; the manifestations of his *Love* to them that fear and serve him, and the *encouragements* they have always had from him; and his *Severity* to those that rebelled against him, and his heavy *Judgments* inflicted on them. The *Prophecies* now visibly fulfilled, confirm our faith of his *Providence* and *Government*, and especially in our *Lord JESUS Christ*, as the *Saviour* of the *World*. In other parts of those *Scriptures* we are taught, how to pray unto, and to praise *God* on all *Occasions*, and may have many helps in these *Duties*. And therefore tho' the *New Testament* ought to be our principal study, yet should we not neglect the reading of the *Old*, or willingly rest ignorant of the things contained in it.

Secondly, We learn hence, That the Holy Scriptures contain *enough* to guide us to Heaven, all things needful for our Salvation, and are a *sufficient Rule of Faith and Life*. There was no need of *Lazarus* his coming from the *dead* to instruct Men in the way of Life. They who then lived had *Moses* and the *Prophets*, and that in *Abraham's* Judgment was *enough*; they that would *bear them* needed no more. Now if *Moses* and the *Prophets* were then enough for the *Jews* who had them; certainly the *Evangelists* and *Apostles* added to them are abundantly *enough* for us *Christians*. We need not then either the *unwritten Traditions* of the *Roman Church*, to piece up the Scriptures with- all on the one side; nor the pretended *New Lights* and *Revelations* of any sort of *Sectaries* among our selves on the other hand. The holy Scriptures given by inspiration of God are profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness. That the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works, 2 Tim. 3. 16.

17. Thirdly, We hence conclude it to be our duty to bearken, and attend with all diligence to the holy Scriptures, and to govern our selves both in our Faith and Practice wholly by them; having always a very high veneration for them. For, tho' the *Jews* had fewer Scriptures than we have, and those a great deal more mystical and obscure than ours are; and tho' *Moses* and the *Prophets* could, after they were dead, speak no other way to the *Jewish Church*, but by those obscurer Writings which they had left behind them; yet saith *Abraham*, as our blessed Saviour here makes him speak, *Let them hear them*. Our Saviour taught

not *Abraham* to call those *obscure* and *mystical Writings*, a *Dead Letter*, or *Lifeless Ink and Paper*, which can reach nothing; as both *Papists* and *Quakers* are wont to call them. These poor deluded People last named, how much soever they are taught to rail at the *Whore* and the *Beast*, have yet been taught withal to speak too much of their Language in many things. Whereby one may shrewdly conjecture (how little soever most of themselves are sensible of it) who have been, and still are their principal Teachers. *Abraham* saith not, They have the *Church*, the *Living Voice* of the *Church*, which gives the *Sense* to those *dead Letters*, let 'em hear it; or they have a *Light within them*, and that must enliven those *dead Characters*, and make them legible and intelligible; the *Voice* they are to *hearken to* is *within them*, let them hear that. Neither was *Abraham* ever taught such *Language* as this, neither (I dare say) hath the blessed *JESUS* (whatsoever that which some call the *Holy Ghost* in the *Church*, and others *Christ*, or the *Spirit within them* may do) ever taught any one to speak of the holy *Scriptures*, as these Men love to do.

Let not us give ear to such Teachers as these are, so long as we have a Teacher from *Heaven*, and may be taught of *God*, as they boast themselves to be. Let us hearken to the *Voice within us*, but let it be no farther, than we find it to be an *Echo* to the *Voice from Heaven*, which once said, *This is my beloved Son, hear ye him* Let us make good use of the *Light within us*, but take heed of being guided by it, where it is not a *Reflection* of *Illumination* of that *Light* which shines from *Heaven* upon us in the *Written Word* of *God*, which
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was shed thence on the *Apostles* on the Day of *Pentecost*, to guide them into all Truth; which they have made visible to us by the *Light* of the *glorious Gospel of Christ* written by them for our instruction. What they *preached* by the inspiration of the *Holy Ghost*, was certainly preached intelligibly, or else they preached in vain. And what was intelligible when *preach'd*, may be also intelligibly written, or else it must be written in vain. If by *hearing* the Words we might understand the Mind of God, we may so understand it by *Reading* the same Words written. If we do not, it is because we have no mind to it.

But here it will be very fit, that we be minded of one thing more, which is this. That when *Abraham* said, They have *Moses* and the *Prophets*, he added not, *Let them keep them laid up hansomly in their Closets; or let them be sure, for a Shew, to have them lying in their Windows; but let them hear them.* That is, let them read, or hear them read, learn what is there taught, and be careful to do what they learn; for to hear is to obey. To have a *Bible*, tho' it have a gilded Cover, and silken Strings, is not enough to make a good Man. A *Bible* lying in the House, can so little preserve a Soul from Hell, that it cannot save the House from the Fire, nor it self from the Rats and Mice. As we too generally use the *Holy Scripture*, we make it to our selves as very a dead Letter, as useless and insignificant Ink and Paper, as any *Papist* or *Quaker* would have us take it for. We may possibly some of us delight to talk of the *Scripture*, and learn to cant in the phrase of it, and again bestow upon it some of those good Words, which we have learn'd in it; and all this they will do,

who yet revile it as we have heard. But what use after all do we make of it? Truly just the same that they do. Whatever we read in the holy *Scripture*, or whatever it *command* or *teach* us, is nothing to us; we have *another Rule* to live by. And what's that, when it comes to be examin'd? Why? 'Tis either *custom* and *fashion*, the generally receiv'd *Opinions* of the World, or those of *our Party*, the manner of our *Education*, the way of our *Forefathers*, or some such thing, much what one with the *Tradition* of the *Papists*: Or else 'tis what we call our *own Reason* and *Judgment*; but is oftener *Humour* and *Phantasy*, or indeed to speak more properly, our *own carnal Will* and *Lusts*; and truly this favours too much of the *Quaker's Light within them*.

Let us all be well assur'd of this one Thing, that neither *Moses* and the *Prophets*, nor *Christ* and his *Apostles*, will ever avail any one of us one jot towards our getting into *Abraham's Bosom*, or escaping the *Rich Man's torments* in *Hell*; so long as they are made no better use of, than some of us now make of them. At this rate, *we have them*, and *we have them not*; just as one hath Meat set before him, but never eateth of it.

How sad a thing is it, that so many thousand Souls go to *Hell*, unto whom God hath liberally vouchsafed all the means of Salvation, and given a most sure and infallible Guide to Heaven; and merely because they are too *Lazy* to make any use of *God's kindness*? Let us but frequently and deliberately read, diligently attend to, perfectly learn, and duly ponder, what in the Holy *Scripture* God teacheth us most plainly, and we shall

shall soon be made to see, how little need we have of such an one as *Lazarus* to be sent to testify unto us. We shall find very plain and easy directions, very weighty and cogent motives, and all the encouragement we can desire to be good, and to serve God faithfully.

O, but we still want Arguments to convince us of the truth of what is called the Holy Scripture. We question not its *Holiness*, that's apparent enough; and, indeed, is the main thing that makes us strongly prejudic'd against it. The truth of it is that which we would fain see clear'd beyond dispute, tho' it would make us very uneasy to see this done. And yet were it done to our satisfaction, how uneasy soever it would be to us, we think that for our own sakes, in regard to our safety, we could be content to live according to it.

Now I fear all this is but shuffle. For seeing the *Holiness* of the Scripture is evidently the thing we are most offended at, let the truth of it be never so clearly demonstrated, we should still retain the same prejudice against it. Nay more, the *Holiness* of it being the best argument of its truth, if by it we are not convinc'd, we shall never be so. However, if we resolve not to believe it, till we have better evidence of the truth of it, than it brings along with it, I see no remedy but we must be as we are, and perish at last by our infidelity. God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son. Heb. 1. 1, 2. And therefore ought we to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For

If the word spoken by Angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience, receiv'd a just recompence of Reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation, which at the first begun to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirm'd unto us by them that heard him: God also bearing them witness with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own Will. Heb. 2. 1. and. 5. When in the Transfiguration on the Mount, Moses and Elias were vanish'd, a Voice from the Father testified thus of Christ, saying, *This is my beloved Son in whom I was pleas'd, hear ye him.* Mat. 17, 5. And because, notwithstanding this Command, some would still be busy to bring in *New Doctrine*, and think a boast of *New light*, a sufficient Confirmation of them, St. Paul hath given us a very fair warning to beware of them, saying, Gal. 1. 8. *Not tho' Lazarus, but tho' we, or an Angel from Heaven Preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have Preach'd unto you, let him be accursed.*

Yea, but it is not another Gospel that we would have, but only a better Confirmation of the truth of this, that we have yet met with. And if this be it we would have, we are not like to have it, for we have all that God thinks fit to give us. What is it we would have more than what we have? Can we imagine that an infinitely Holy God, should give us any other Rule of Life, but the most Holy that can be? And is it not a just exception against the Gods of the Heathen World, and a good evidence that they are no Gods, but Devils; That they delight in, or give way to unholiness in their worshippers? Nothing can be a better

better Argument of a Doctrine's being *Divine*, than its *purity*. Now, was there ever a more *Holy Doctrine* taught among Men? Is it possible for the Wit of Man to invent or conceive any thing *purer*? Can we think of any thing, which preach'd and believ'd through the World, could make mankind more universally or perfectly *good or happy*? Is there any one tittle of it, that being believ'd and practis'd would do the World, or any part of it, any *hurt*? Doth not all the Evil or Hurt that Men suffer in the World arise from the not believing and practising of it in all its Branches? Can any Doctrine therefore ever be believ'd to come from the God of *purity*, if this do not? If it were the Invention of a Man, was there ever Man that did oblige the World to thank him, as that Man had done? Were it not even on this one account worthy of all acceptation? And ought we not for this to wish that all would believe it? Whatever we will believe, as to its *coming from God*; this is certain, that no Man can, with any shew of reason, reject it, as an *ill Rule of Life*, but he must declare himself void of the principles of *Morality*, and an *Enemy* to the *happiness* of mankind.

Again, was ever any Doctrine better confirm'd, by many *wonderful works* wrought in the Name of the *Author* of it, than this? Could ever any wonders wrought in Confirmation of a Doctrine be better attested to all Posterity, than this hath been? Or hath any attestation given at any time to Matters of Fact been more generally receiv'd, or been more universally convincing and satisfactory to wise and inquisitive Men than this hath been? Was ever record so

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miraculously preserved against all the malicious attempts of Devils and Men to abolish it, as the holy *Scripture* hath been? What then I ask again is it, that we would have to satisfy us? Is it such *Evidence* as cannot be *gainsaid*, or *contradicted*; will this, and nothing less serve our turn? And truly, if we mean no more but such an evidence as cannot with any *reason* be *gainsaid* or *contradicted*, such it is that we have. But if we mean such evidence as cannot be *gainsaid* or *contradicted* by *unreasonable* Men, who are resolved to *cavil* against every thing that doth not *please* them, we must never expect to find what we would have. The truth is, we cannot endure to *gainsay* and *contradict* our *Lusts*, and to *deny* our *Selves*, which the holy *Gospel* of *Christ* has made the chief part of the *Christian's* Character. This is a thing we are not able to hear of with patience. Such *holiness* as God calls for in all whom he will make happy, is a thing we will never yield to, so long as we can conceive that there is a *possibility* of escaping *Torments* without it. The *blessedness* of *Abraham's* Children in Heaven we are little concern'd for; there is so much of *holiness* implied in it, that we have no kind of *relish* of it, nor *appetite* to it; and therefore could be well enough content to go without it, so that we may escape the *Rich-man's* *Torments* in Hell. And whilst we can persuade our selves, that it is *possible* to escape them, for the love of Sin, we will *venture* at it. Nothing therefore but *Demonstrations*, and an *evident impossibility* of escaping eternal *Torments*, will have any force upon us. Tho' when things are well considered, one would think, that one who hath the faculty of *reasoning*, and *contriving* for his own good, should hardly be persuaded

swaded to venture on such a thing as *damnation* to *eternal Torments*, where there is but some *probability*, that if he live as he doth, he cannot escape them. Suppose it but *probable* I may be *happy*, living an holy and religious Life; and on the other side, that if I do not so I shall be eternally miserable, shall I not be a very *fool*, if against such *probability*, I will rather chuse an *unholy* life, and not be in a fair and *probable* way of safety and blessedness; but of eternal Torments, only because I am not assured, beyond all *possibility* of the contrary, that I shall be tormented? Should we be so mad in all other Cases, as we are in this, what would become of us? Would not all the great Affairs and Business of the World be neglected, and all Men rot in sloth and folly, were they so unreasonable as to venture on nothing, where is but a *possibility* of miscarrying, or being disappointed? Will we not abridge our selves of a little Ease, Sleep and Play, and be at the pains and charge to Plow and Sowe in hopes of a good Harvest, and for fear of a Famine, merely because 'tis not evident beyond all *impossibility*, either that we may have no Harvest, or that if we have none, God may rain down *Manna* for us to feed upon? Will not the Merchant venture a considerable Summe for but a *probable* advantage, because there is a *possibility* that all may be lost, and again a *possibility* too that he may grow as rich some other way without such a venture? Will we not provide Estates for our Children to live upon, and labour to prevent their going a Begging or Famishing hereafter; only because 'tis not *impossible*, that they may die before they need such Estates, or may waste them when they have them, or may find for themselves some way

way to live without them? We are few of us so mad as to put these things to the venture, upon a conceit of mere *possibilities* or *impossibilities*. None of us will stand playing, or sit eating before a Cannon's mouth, when to be discharg'd, because we think it *possible* it may not take fire, or that by some accident or other, we may escape. Why then should we venture on *eternal* torments, notwithstanding all *probable* Arguments, only because of an imaginary *possibility* of escaping them? Might we not appeal to a *fool* to judge, how *wise* we are in taking such a course as this? And yet it is only Men's relying on a bare *possibility*, against all the *clearest evidence* that the case they are concern'd in will bear, that keeps them wicked, and encourageth them to account themselves the only *Wits* of the World, and to call them *fools* who think it *wisdom* to be *religious*.

Suppose we, that God himself judgeth the holy *Scripture* to be *Evidence* *sufficient* of his Will concerning our *duty* and *expectation*; and that he is resolved not to give us any better *evidence* of either, for the ground of our *Faith*. Tho' such *evidence* be supposed not to be so *demonstrative*, as to exclude all *possibility* of the contrary; yet may it be, in all reason, *enough* for us. Yea, when things are well considered, it seems more *reasonable*, that it should be so than otherwise; and very unreasonable in us to expect, that God should give us any other kind of Arguments, and motives of *faith* and *obedience*, than such as he hath given us in his *Word*. Unless he had opened *Heaven* and *Hell*, and laid all things therein naked to our *bodily Eyes*; and that not

once, or twice ; but in every Age, as often as Men would call for it ; I know not, what more could be done to convince us, than hath been done already. If God should but do thus a *few times*, and should not repeat the same in every Age and Generation of Men ; the succeeding Age would as little believe what the former Age had seen, upon the Testimony of those who had seen it, as we are more apt to believe the *miracles* attested to by them of former Ages. And yet again, should God so far *humour* us, as to do this, this would be to *force* belief, and not to *persuade*. Nor, I say, to give us *reasons* why we should believe, but to make it *impossible* for us not to believe. For a Man cannot but believe, what he plainly *sees* with his eyes. *Faith*, in such a case, can be no *Christian Grace* or *Vertue*, but a *natural thing* ; and a *necessity*, such as rendered us uncapable of being rewarded for it. All *Vertue* is *voluntary*, and of choice, and our choosing and practising it in love to God and Goodness, is that which makes it *commendable*, and through the mercy of God in *Christ JESUS* rewardable. It is no *vertue* in any one to believe 'tis Light, when he sees it is so, he cannot do otherwise if he have his sight, and be in his right Wits ; and should be very unreasonable to expect a Reward for it. *Faith* is a *Vertue* which shall be rewarded with *eternal Life*, which, were it only the belief of things seen, or, which is all one, upon such *evidence* as excludes all *possibility*, even in our *imagination*, of their being otherwise, it would not be. Our blessed *Saviour* was pleased, in condescension to the Infirmary of St. Thomas, to let him see and feel his Hands and Side ; but withal, said enough

enough to make him sensible, that such an evidence, tho' it *strengthen'd* his Faith, yet did it lessen the *vertue* of it, Joh. 20. 29. *Thomas* (saith he) *because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* And what saith the *Evangelist*, v. 31? *These things are written, that ye might believe, that JESUS is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have Life through his Name.* Faith then is a Grace whereby we believe what we see not, and the things which cannot otherwise be understood, but by the *testimony* of God, and of such as are sent by God; and this *testimony* may not be such as (to our thoughts) excludes all *possibility* of the contrary, and yet, enough to persuade all Men that use their *reason* right, or are wont in earnest to consult their own *Interest*, and to seek out the *surest* way they can to secure themselves from *Misery*.

It is plain from all the *Methods* of God's transacting with Men, that he would have us to be good and *virtuous*, and is resolv'd to bring all those that are so to eternal Happiness by *Christ JESUS*. To this end he hath reveal'd this his gracious purpose for us by the same his *Son*, our Lord, and by others Authoriz'd by him to declare it unto us. They have done this, and the substance of their *Doctrine* they have left in *writing* for the use of all posterity, together, with a relation of the *Miracles* which they did to witness their Commission from God. God hath preserv'd these sacred Records among us to this day, against all the endeavours us'd to destroy or corrupt them, and hath given very great
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success to what they have done. This God accounts enough to persuade us to Embrace a Doctrine so *Divine* and *Pure*, and undeniably much for the *benefit* and *happiness* of the World, and promising a reward incomprehensibly great and glorious. For tho' the *evidence* be very *considerable*, and altogether enough to *convince* Men of reason, yet, God expects justly, That the *purity* of the *Doctrine*, and the *glory* of the *Reward*, should much more affect us, and prevail more mightily with us to *love* and *delight* in him, and in the *Religion* which he hath Commanded; yea, more, than ten times more such evidences could do towards winning our belief. Furthermore, both the *Duties* and the *Rewards* are so suited to the *Nature* which he hath given us, and so *perfective* of it; that 'tis very reasonable to think, we should, as soon as we are well acquainted with them, fall very much in *love* with them. To love knowledge and goodness, and to desire and labour for a glorious reward, that of being perfected in the presence and enjoyment of God, in the clearest light of Knowledge, and fullest measures of Goodness, is so natural a thing to a reasonable Creature, that such an one being inform'd of the Grace and Goodness of God, in desiring to be no otherwise glorified by us, than by our endeavouring to be as like him as we can be, and sitting ourselves to enjoy him eternally in Heaven, must needs make us set our hearts wholly, if possible, on this one thing. And very ordinary evidences would persuade one that considers this, to believe the *Holy Scriptures*, when it informs us of all this more plainly, and particularly than any thing

thing else hath done, or can do. It is the *love of God and Holiness* which our *Faith* is to bring us to, or else it doth us no good; 'tis this alone that God will *reward*, and which will keep us out of *Hell*. If then for the love of God, and our natural Duty as we are Men, we be resolv'd to do God's Will so far as we can learn it, in the *Holy Scripture*, we shall quickly discern, how every thing therein commended to our *Faith*, conduceth to our *perfection*, and God's *glory*, and therefore shall easily assent to the truth of it. The *Holy Scripture* shews us most plainly our *Sin*, and our *Duty*, and our *Danger*, and God's *Mercy* and *Goodness*, the *beauty of Holiness*, the *means* of it, and the *Reward* promis'd to it; and if this will not persuade us to *love God and Goodness*, tho' we had all that *evidence* which we most unreasonably desire, and could not choose but believe every Syllable of the *Scripture* to be true; yet, would not such a *Faith* as this keep us out of *Hell*. 'Tis that faith only which adheres to God for the love of God, and of the things reveal'd by God; and makes us resolve, notwithstanding any Temptations to doubting, for the same cause to persevere in it to the end, that will save us.

O, that we would wisely consider this, That it is not for want of *sufficient Evidence*, that we do not believe the *Scripture*; but it is the want of *Love to God*, and the *Holy Truths* which the *Scripture* teacheth us, that makes any of us continue *Infidels*. That is, we cannot endure to be told, unto what our *own Nature* obligeth us, nor to live like Men govern'd by *Reason*; for that would shew us that we ought to consider both God's Na-

ture

ture, and our own; and that which the *Scripture* teacheth us, is but to behave our selves as is most *suitable to both*. We set our *Wits* on work to find *flaws* in the *Evidence*, because we would not have any *Evidence* at all for such things as we *love not*; and therefore would not have to be true. Would we instead of this, set our *Reason* on work in good earnest, to consider *God's Nature*, and our own; and how it becomes us to carry our selves towards him as his *rational Creatures*; and how much the Things commended to our *Faith* tend to the *perfecting* and *dignifying* of our *Nature*, and to our both *present* and *future Happiness*, it might be hop'd that we would *believe*, and be converted. But whilst we like not to retain *God* in our *Knowledge*, no wonder if He gives us over to a *Reprobate Mind*. Rom. 1. 28. The *Apostle* speaks of some, who come with all *deceivableness* of *unrighteousness*, that they shall mightily prevail among Men, and that because they receiv'd not the love of the *Truth*, that they might be saved. And for this cause (*saith he*) *God* shall send them *strong delusion*, that they should believe a Lie; that they all might be damned, that believ'd not the *Truth*, but had pleasure in *Unrighteousness*. 2 Thess. 2. 9, 10, 11.

Let us therefore (as we love our selves, and would not run blindly into the fire, which never shall be quenched) beware how by indulging the *Flesh*, we let our *Lusts* get so great a command over our *Reason*, that they put out our Eyes, or make us impatient of that *Light* which discovers unto us their *foulness*. If we be not very cautious herein, we shall quickly be enslaved to the *God of this World*, the *Spirit* that now *worketh* in the Children of *Disobedience*, or *Unbelief*, who
blindeth

blindeth the minds of them that believe not, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine unto them, 2 Cor. 4. 4. Let us but have honest hearts, but so honest, I say, as to deal faithfully with our selves, and to consult our own greatest Interest; Let us but consider how much it must needs concern us to please the God who made us, and resolve to do his Will to the utmost of our power, and we shall find verified in our selves, those Words of our Saviour, Joh. 7. 17. If any Man will do this, i. e. God's Will, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self.

LUKE

LUKE XVI. 30.

And he said, Nay Father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the Dead, they will repent.

ABRAMHAM had said enough in the foregoing Verse, to let the *Rich man* understand, That the Holy Scriptures are a sufficient means appointed by God for the Conviction and Conversion of Sinners, and keeping them out of Hell. But it is hard for any one to say, what will satisfy a wicked Man. All that *Abraham* had said seem'd yet too little. He likes, (as such Men do,) his own Way best, and therefore he insists yet upon it, and is not willing to be denied. What Father *Abraham*, *Moses*, and the *Prophets*? Is it enough to hear them? *Nay*, Father, that cannot be. I, and my *Brethren*, had heard them long enough, and are none of us the better for it. The *Writing* that they have left is but a *dead letter*, and if it speak by the help of another's Voice, is it possible it should make such an Impression on the mind of the hearer, as the Words of a *dead Man* would do; How would the Apparition of a dead Man startle them, and keep them awake, who are apt to fall asleep when

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the *Scripture* is read, or preach'd unto them. Alas, I know by too sad Experience how little the *Scripture* is able to do upon Men of my Temper, addicted to pleasure, and given over to a voluptuous and Epicurean Life. It could never prevail with me to change my way of Living, or to abate any thing of any one single pleasure, or of what I was delighted in. I could always eat and drink as sumptuously and intemperately, and live as extravagantly in all Excess, and yet as securely too, as if I had never read or heard one Word of the *Scripture*. My Back was never the more modestly clothed, nor my Belly the more moderately fed, nor the Poor the more liberally reliev'd, nor any one of my Lusts one jot abridged or stinted in the large and daily Provision I made for the Flesh; I was as much governed by my own Will and Appetite, and by the vain customs and fashions of the World, as tho' I had never heard of any of those Laws or Promises, Judgments or Threatnings of God which are read in the *Scripture*. Nay, I was brought to so little veneration for those Writings, which are esteemed so sacred; and I stood so little in awe of any thing which they contain; that I could at any time make my self and my Company merry with them; it was our sport to laugh at them, and they help'd us to many a Jest, and made us seem witty one to another, whilst we boldly abus'd and profan'd them; and derided those as simple credulous Fools, who believ'd them. But now, if whilst we were in this merry Mode, one from the dead had suddenly appear'd among us, and told us what they were doing in the other World where he had been, and bid us make ready to die, for we must
shortly

shortly go to keep them Company, would not this have spoil'd all our *Sport* in a moment? Would not the sight of this *Spectre*, and the lamentable Story he could have told us struck us to the Heart, and put us upon some serious Thoughts, and at last, when the astonishment was a little over, made us sensible of our Folly? I am confident it would, and therefore Father *Abraham* I again renew my Suit to thee with all earnestness in behalf of my *Brethren*, that *Lazarus* may be forthwith sent unto them; they will then *repent*, otherwise I despair of their *Repentance*, and lie trembling to think how shortly they will be here with me in this place of *Torments*.

How confident doth the *Rich Man* here seem, That his *Brethren* would *repent*, if one were sent from the *Dead* to *Testify* unto them. How little reason he had for this great confidence, will, I hope, be shew'd anon. But thus it is with this sort of Men. *Repentance* is a thing they will hardly be brought to by any means. To part with their Sins so long as they Live, and can feel the pleasure of them, something is ever wanting to persuade them to this. They are *Men of Reason*, and will do nothing till they see *sufficient Reason*, to persuade them to it; but as soon as *Reason* is given them, they are as ready to be ruled by it, as others are to believe they know not what, nor why. They *repent* not yet, only because they are not *Fools* enough to believe every Story that is told them by Men that can know no more the truth of what they tell them, than *they* do. But they are so much *Men*, so wholly govern'd by *Reason*, which the *rash credulity* of others shews they want, that when this persuades, they will certainly re-

Pent. They only love their Sin, till they see *Reason* enough to believe that there is something which better deserves their Love. And nothing can be *Reason enough* for this, but the *Testimony* of one from the *dead*, who can tell them what he hath *seen* and *felt*. So soon as ever they can meet with such good Intelligence, you may be sure of it they will *repent*.

Let us here a little consider what *Reasons* might move this *wicked Gentleman* in *Hell* to insist so earnestly on this Request, so that he preferreth the sending one from the *Dead*, before all other means, of bringing his *Brethren* to *Repentance*. We must suppose he is here made to speak the Sense of *himself*, and of his *Brethren*, and of all *such* as they were, *when alive*. And therefore by considering the Things that mov'd him to desire this so importunately, we may learn what it is that keeps such Persons so long as they live from repenting.

And here, *First*, from the whole Discourse we may observe, That *one reason* why such Men *repent not*, is this, the confidence that they have in themselves, that they are *Men* of so much *Sense* and *Reason*, that they understand themselves, and all their own Concerns, better than any other can do. That the only reason why they value not *Religion* as others do, nor live so *holy lives* as they do, is, because they are *wiser* than they, and will not be govern'd by *uncertainties*. But knowing themselves *ready* always to be ruled by *reason*, and that if they meet with *reason enough* to change their present Course of Life, they are sure they will be ruled by it: Herein they know they Act like *rational Creatures*,

tures, and if there be a *God* who made them such, they make themselves sure he will never punish them for *that*. Of this mind the *Rich-man* had always been, and this he knew to be the sense of his *Brethren*. They were, he knew, *Men of reason*, and would be convinced by a *sufficient Testimony*. Only that they wanted to bring them to *repentance*: Now, all that can be said to Men so wise in their own conceits, is but this, that there is more hope of a fool than of them. God will not, they may be sure, condemn them for Acting according to Reason, but for very unreasonably magnifying their own wisdom, and opposing it to his Will. That he will condemn them for, is for resisting the light which he hath given them, and saying, they see when he tells them they are blind, therefore their Sin remaineth. In vain pretend Men to live according to Reason, whilst they live contrary to human Nature, as it hath been shew'd that wicked Men do. And he is mad, and not rational, who knowing himself the Creature of an all wise God, as all rational Creatures know themselves to be, accounts it Wisdom to be govern'd rather by his own Imaginations than by Divine Revelation; or who thinks that a wise God made Men reasonable, and hath not given them a sufficient revelation of his Will, whereby they may know how to behave themselves towards him. It is not (as is pretended) want of sufficient Reason shew'd them to repent, but want of a just Consideration of the Reasons which are given them, that keeps them from repenting. And whatever these Witty Gentlemen are pleas'd to call themselves, they are not Men of great Reason too strong for Divine Revelations so attested as it is; but Men of prodigious

Lust and *Folly*, too strong for their *Reason*. And of this, if never before, they will be convinced in *Hell*.

Secondly, This *Rich Gentleman* now in *Hell*, and made sensible of his *Folly* by his *Torments*, might, by the *Flames* wherein he lay, be awakened, into some such thoughts as these.

1. He might well suppose, That a sudden and altogether unexpected *Apparition* of a *Dead-man's Ghost*, would put his *Brethren* into a great fright and *astonishment*; after which, as they were able to recover, and come to themselves, they would, in all probability, entertain some *serious Thoughts*, and begin to consider a little, and so *discourse* among themselves, what should be the meaning of what they saw and heard. And thus far I verily believe he was in the right. For tho' such *joyial fellows* above all things hate *thinking*, as a very troublesome thing, and a mighty Enemy to good Company; yet such a sight would be very apt in such a surprize as this, to daunt a little the stoutest sinner of them all, and to make the most *unthinking* Man a little *thoughtful*. It would cool his *present Lust*, and mar his *Mirth* for some time; and put him into such a posture, as one should hardly be able by their pale looks to distinguish, which was the *Ghost*, he, or the thing that appeared to him, *Reason* must have something to awake it in such Men, howsoever they boast themselves *Masters* of it, they seldom shew the *Command* they have of it any otherwise, than by *Eating* and *Drinking*, and *playing it asleep*; and serious consideration is the life of reason. The want of this the *Rich Man* knew well enough had kept him from *Repenting*,
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and therefore might be so earnest with *Abraham* to have this course taken with his *Brethren*, as that which was most likely to put them on this use of their reason.

2. He might well hope, that being thus *awake*, and beginning to think seriously of what had happened, they might be convinc'd, or at least be brought to suspect, because of this Apparition of one, as they suppos'd, from the Dead, That there is a *future state* of Men after Death, and that something of them remains alive after their *Bodies* are laid up to corrupt; the thing which they had been told of in the *Scripture*, but would not believe. The *Rich Man* well knew how uneasy to him he had ever found the thoughts of this, and what shifts he was wont to make to prevent them from giving him too much trouble, and abating the gulf he had in his sinful pleasures; and might very well think, that his *Brethren* were yet as averse from such Thoughts, as he had been. But thought he, if one be sent unto them from the *Dead*, and begin to talk to them about the *future state* of the Dead, and testify of it from his own Experience, if this will not thoroughly convince them, that the *Souls* of them who die do live after Death, yet will it make them *less confident* of the contrary, and more *cautious* how they live. And this, I think, it could not chuse but do, supposing them fully satisfied, that what appear'd to them was no delusion, but something that they knew was once alive, and had been Dead.

3. He might suppose, that one who had some time tasted of the Joys of *Paradise*, and had lain feasting himself in *Abraham's bosom*, would be

able to give them a more *lively* and *affecting* Description, of that *blessed State*, wherein he then was; and make them more clearly understand the vast *difference* between the *imperfect* and *brutish* pleasures, which they were now so fond of, and those *perfect Celestial Joys* in another World, which they must certainly lose, if they repented not. Words fit to express the *excellency* and *glory* of *Pious Souls* departed hence, are too great for the Mouths of *Mortals*, and all such as cannot speak from their own feeling. Those *figures* of Speech whereby they are some way shadow'd forth unto us in Holy Scripture, to such as have not some *Spiritual Sense* of them, and want a *Spiritual Eye* to see thro' the *Metaphor*, do but *obscure* or *disguise* them; and to such Men as we are now speaking of, make them seem *fabulous* and *incredible*. *Lazarus* would be able, he thought, so plainly to set forth the greatness of that Heavenly Banquet, whereat he was continually entertain'd, and all those glories of the other World whereof he was a constant Spectator, that after they had once given him a full hearing, they could not but be ravish'd with the relation he had made, and they would never again have any Appetite to any of those low and earthly pleasures which this World afforded, but look on them as despicable things in comparison of what he would commend to their choice. And then,

4. He might suppose, That one who had seen, as *Lazarus* might be suppos'd by him to have done, that *dismal sight* of *Souls* tormented with the *Devils* in Hell, and had seen the *Rich Gentleman*, instead of his *Purple* and *fine Linnen*, wrapp'd
up

up in *Robes of Flame* ; and had heard his lamentable *cries*, and all to no purpose, for one drop of cold *water* ; would be able to tell his *Brethren* this tragical News, with such mournful and penetrating accents of Sorrow and Horror ; that they could not chuse but feel their Hearts melting within them, by the bare relation of the tormenting heat he endur'd. They must needs weep themselves into repentance, whilst they wept to hear of their Brother's miserable condition, wherein he now was, only for living as they did. And yet more especially, when *Lazarus* should let them understand, that it was at their *tormented Brother's* earnest request, that he was now sent to give them timely warning to *repent*, lest they come into his sad Condition. That the fearful apprehension of their coming into the same Torments, was no inconsiderable part of the Torments he now endured, and therefore if they had any *kindness* for him, who could not in *Hell* forget his *natural affection* to them, they would, if not for their own safety, yet for his sake, and to give him what ease they might, repent of their Sins. However, he must let them know, that they had no other way of escaping those Torments into which, otherwise, they must very shortly come, but to *repent* speedily. And if they would not take this fair warning, which he, at their *Brother's* suit, was now sent to give them, when they came to *Hell*, besides all the *Torments* that the *Devils* would there exercise them with, they would there every one of them help to torment their *Brethren*, and so should every one for ever feel the Torments of Sin.

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Such thoughts as these we may suppose, and what else I know not, might make this wicked Soul so desirous to have *Lazarus* sent to his *Brethren*. The *damned* in *Hell* do *know*, how hardly soever the *wicked* on *Earth* are brought to believe it, that there is no escaping of *Hell-torments*, but by a timely *repentance*. And 'tis evident, that wicked Men do therefore continue in their *impenitence*, because they do not so firmly believe, either that there shall be such *Torments*, or that a sinful Life will certainly bring them into them at last, as to make them afraid of them, and cautious how they venture upon them. And the reason again why they do not give such credit to these things as it concerns them to do, is because they are too little *serious*, and do not seriously consider either the weight of the *Matters* commended to their belief, or the *Revelation* which God hath made of them in his *Word*, or the motives of *Credibility* which that divine *Revelation* brings along with it: And hence they complain of a want of sufficient *Evidence*, only because they will not consider either the evidence that they have, or what ought to be held sufficient in such a case. And *lastly*, the reason why they are not *serious*, and consider all this so little, is, because they have addicted themselves wholly to the *Pleasures* of the *World*, and have yielded so much to their *Lusts*, that they have little or no use of their *Reason* in any thing, wherein their *Lusts*, and carnal *Appetites*, command obedience. They are in too much haste to fulfil the *Lusts* of the *Flesh*, to which, in a little time, they become perfect *Slaves*, so that they cannot afford themselves time enough to consider, Unless

less therefore, by something *extraordinary*, this kind of Men be *terrified* from the pursuit of their carnal Pleasures, and so awakened out of their security, that they begin to grow a little *serious*, and to think well what will become of them, they are hardly ever cured of their folly. To bring his *Brethren* therefore to this, the wicked Man in *Hell* is so importunate to have one sent unto them from the *dead*. But tho' he could have prevailed to have this done, yet how much he was out in his aim, and how little it would have availed his Brethren, we shall learn from *Abraham's* final Answer, which comes now to be considered.

LUKE

LUKE XVI. Ver. 31.

*And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses
and the Prophets, neither will they be per-
suaded, tho' one rose from the Dead.*

THIS is *Abraham's* final Answer to the *Rich-
Man's* importunate Petition, and a perem-
ptory rejection of his *Project* for saving his *five
Brethren* from the torments he was in. And in
this *Answer*, he doth as good as tell him very
plainly, what we are all concern'd to take notice
of, That they who *believe not* the *Holy Scrip-
tures*, and are not *persuaded to repent*, by such
Arguments as God hath been pleas'd by his *Holy
Pen men* there to make use of, will *never be
persuaded* by any other means whatsoever. This
will now, I hope, be made very plain unto
us, by considering the *reasonableness* of *Abraham's*
Answer, what farther evidence imaginable can
any one desire of the things commended to our
Faith in the *Holy Scripture*, which is that we
call *Divine Revelation*, and if it be *truth*, is so ;
and consequently of his *interest* and *concern* to
govern himself in all things by it, besides that
which he hath already ; but only the testimony

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of one from the Dead? This, indeed, which the Rich Man in Hell is here suppos'd to desire, in behalf of his Brethren, is the same thing which I have heard more than once demanded by some, too much of this temper and manner of Life, when they have been advis'd to repent and change their vain way of living. *This World* (said they) we know, we live in it, and we taste of the good things of it, and we now live in *Health* and *Plenty*, and as we desire to do. But what *that other World* you talk of is, we know not, nor can you tell us. We have, indeed, read and heard of it, but from such as knew it as little as we do. Who, I pray, ever came from the other World to assure us what is there to be found, or how it fares with them that are gone thither, and what kind of Entertainment they have there met withal? Bring us once such an one to testify of those things you speak of, and we will do as you would have us. In the mean time, one Bird in the Hand is worth two in the Bush, we will take what good we can of what we have, and not famish now in expectation of plenty, no body can tell where. These would have one sent from the Dead to testify. But if the Holy Scripture will not persuade to repentance, nothing in the World will do it.

To clear this we are to consider these things following.

First, We have to consider, What kind of Persons they are, who are to be persuaded. They are such as have not repented of their Sins, and without repentance must go to Hell. The business which

which the *Dead-man* must be sent to do, is to *persuade* them to *repent*, and that to this end, That they may not come into the place of torments. They are Persons that are in *love* with their *Sins*, and delight themselves in the vain pleasures of this life; and have *no love* at all for *Holiness*, nor can find any pleasure in a *Sober* and *Religious* Life. They are Persons, who, that they may not disquiet their Minds, nor lessen their delight, and worldly Pleasures at present, with the Thoughts and Fears of an after-reckoning, are not willing to believe what in the Holy Scripture they are told of *Heaven* and *Hell*, but live as *securely*, and as merrily as they can; banishing, as much as is possible from their Minds, the thoughts of either. This is plainly the *Temper* of those Persons who are to be *persuaded*.

Secondly, We are next to consider what *Arguments* the Holy Scripture affords, proper for the *moving* and *persuading* such Persons to *repent*, and to *love God*, and to *live* a *holy*, *sober* and *religious* Life. And we find them to be such as these.

1. *God* is, in the Holy Scripture, discover'd unto us to be altogether such an one, as when we are at leisure to consult our own *Reason*, it will tell us *God* must be, that is, a *Being* infinitely perfect in *Power*, *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, on whom we and all things depend for our *Being* and *Preservation*; and hence it is our *Interest* to *obey* him, and an *unnatural* Thing to do otherwise. Hence also is he most worthy to be *loved* by us, and *obey'd* in *Love*, being the *first*, *Supreme* and *chief* *Good*, and without whom nothing can be *good*. He is always describ'd to us as a most *Holy God*, whom no *unholy* thing can please, seeing *unholiness* is *contrary* to his

his Nature, and as he is God he cannot but hate it, and must therefore be highly displeased with every one that continueth unboly without Repentance.

2. We Men in the Holy Scripture are made known to our selves to be the Work of God, and to be made in the Image of God, and to be the principal Objects of God's love, and care here on Earth. We are told how he hath made and fitted many good Things for us, and hath made and fitted us to enjoy them. That he hath given us such a nature, as that we may be sensible of his Goodness towards us, and of the Obligations thereby laid upon us to Love and Obedience, and of the happiness that we have, and may have in the Enjoyment of his Love and Favour; and consequently of our own Interest to serve and please him in all Things, and of the great loss we must needs have, if by disobeying him, and continuing impenitent, we disoblige and offend him. In as much as we cannot sin against him, or disregard him, but we sin against our selves, and destroy our selves by the loss of his Love.

3. We are in the Holy Scripture made acquainted with all the Particulars of his Will, and our Duty, and may discern his Goodness to us in every Branch of it. Whatever He requireth of us we find to be Holy, most suitable to his own holy nature, and Just, our own reason being judge, and judging according to the most perfect Rules of Equity; and Good, perfecting and dignifying our Nature, and promoting the Happiness of the World. Rom. 7. 12. In the old Testament all is thus summed up, Mic. 6. 8. To do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.
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And to the same purpose in the *New Testament*. Thus *Tit. 2. 12.* *To live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present World.* Or more briefly, according to our blessed Saviour, *To love the Lord our God with all the heart, and our Neighbour as our selves.* All this is undeniably agreeable to our nature; and the *Promises* encouraging us to do Things in themselves so reasonable, are exceeding great and glorious, the endless Fruition of God himself, and of all Joy and Blessedness in Him in his Kingdom of Glory. All amounts but to this, to do our selves good, and to allow our own Nature it's Right, and to honour God on Earth, that we may be happy in him for ever, so that to call us to *Repentance*, is but to call us to return, and be reconciled to our happiness, and to come to our Wits again, and Live like our selves, after any Fit of Madness.

4. We are in the Holy Scripture encourag'd not to despair, because of our past Sins, how many or great soever; or because of any present weaknesses or imperfections; seeing that God therein declares himself to be gracious, merciful, and long suffering, pardoning Iniquity, Transgression and Sin; and that his mercy endureth for ever, and he wills not the death of a Sinner, but would have him turn from his Wickedness and live. He will not have any to be miserable, but them alone, who against all his gracious Tenders of Mercy and Life, wilfully and needlessly chuse their own Misery. He hath of his own pure Goodness, so order'd all Things by JESUS Christ, that none of our unwilling Failings shall ever hurt us, nor any sin that we in time are truly humbled for, and repent of, shall be charg'd upon us. He hath assured

red us, That Strength shall be given us upon our conscientious use of such means as he hath ordain'd; and that if we suffer any thing in our pursuit of happiness by *Repentance*, and a *Holy Life*, it shall turn to our good in the greater measures of Glory; and that whatsoever we now deny our selves in, for the Love which we bear unto him, it shall be recompensed unto us an hundred Fold.

5. In the Holy Scripture God hath told us as well what the *Impenitent*, as what the *Penitent* is to expect from him; what the one is to fear, as well as what the other is to hope for. If any one fall into the Pit of Destruction, it cannot be because he had not notice of it, or was not warn'd to take heed to his steps. God hath not left us ignorant of his Power, that he can cast both Soul and Body into Hell; nor of his Purpose, that they who obey not the Gospel of *Christ* shall be punished with everlasting Destruction, and lie in unquenchable Fire prepar'd for the Devil and his Angels.

Now, who can say, that either these Things are not sufficiently declar'd in the Holy Scripture, or that these are not the properest motives to persuade Men to *Repentance*. If any one think that these are not enough, let him say what more he would have. Is it the *Testimony* of one sent from the Dead?

Thirdly, Let us now therefore consider what Reason we can find to hope this should persuade Men to *Repentance*, sooner than all that we find in the Holy Scripture. Could such an one make us know any more, or use any other Arguments to persuade us, than God in the Holy Scripture hath

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done?

done? Or could he give us *better assurance* of the *Truth*, he should discover, than we have of the *Truths*, in the holy *Scripture*? If neither, then to what purpose should such an one be sent? To try all this.

1. Let us suppose *Lazarus* to be sent, as the *Rich Man* desir'd, to persuade his Brethren to *repent*. What could he to this end tell them but this. That he whom they once knew to be so very poor, and fore upon the Earth, and whom they so much despised, whilst he was alive in this World, was now in a very happy and comfortable Condition ever since he died; that the Angels had carried him into *Abraham's Bosom*, whither he also was well assur'd, that all sincere *Penitents* shall at last be carried. He could tell them also, That as he lay *above* in *Abraham's Bosom*, he saw their *Rich Brother* a great way *below* him *tormented* in *Flames*; and that he heard him cry out most lamentably, and beg that a drop of *Water* might be allow'd him to cool his *Tongue*, and that this was denied him. That upon his earnest *Entreaty*, *Abraham* had sent him unto them, to warn them to *repent* before it shall be too late, lest when they least think of it, they also go into the same place of *Torments*.

This is it whereof the *Dead Man* must be the *Intelligencer* to his Brethren. And might they not understand a great deal more than this by hearing the holy *Scripture*? Hath not that informed us, that not only all Men of the *Rich Man's* Temper, but that all wicked Men of what sort soever, dying *impenitent*, shall be *tormented* in *Hell*; and that not only such pious *Beggars* as *Lazarus*, but all pious Men; who *repent* of their Sins, and bring forth

Fruits

Fruits meet for Repentance, shall after Death be blessed for ever in Heaven? Why then must one come from the Dead to tell Men, what was sufficiently told them before? Will his repeating the *same motives to Repentance* over again, add more force and efficacy to them, than was before in them? Are not *Arguments and Reasons* the *same*, whoever use them? If the holy *Scripture* cannot persuade with such *motives to repentance*, how should a *dead Man* persuade to it by using only the *same motives* of persuasion? If any thing be added by him, it is only his *single Testimony* of his own *Experience*. He hath found all we have been told in the *Scripture* to be true, he saith, and we must believe him, and this *Belief* will persuade us to repent, and so would our *Belief* of the *Scripture* have done, if that would do it. All returns to this, the *Testimony* of a *dead Man* is thought more *credible*, than that of the holy *Scripture*, and all that God hath done to witness to us the truth and *Divine Authority* of it. *Moses* and the *Prophets*, *Christ* and his *Apostles* are not thought worthy of our hearkening to, till the *Testimony* of one from the *Dead* give them more credit with us. The *Goodness* of the *Laws*, the *Reasonableness* of the *Duties* such, and so great, that none can reject them; but either one who never would be at the pains to hear and understand them, or one that is abandon'd to his *Loss*, and hates *Goodness*, regards not *Reason*, and values not the happiness of *Mankind*; this is not enough to persuade. The *Promises* of the *Gospel*, tho' of things most necessary, excellent and glorious, tho' made by him, whose *Fidelity* is essential to him, and makes it impossible for him to lie or deceive us. All the ter-

rible *Menaces* of Punishment to the *Impenitent*, tho' denounc'd by the *Just Judge* of the World, and one infinite in *power* to execute Justice; all these are not of force enough to *persuade* us. The Testimony of our own *Reason* bearing witness to God, and demonstrating to us how necessarily it follows from the perfections of his Nature, that he must provide good Things for them that faithfully serve him, and punish the *Rebellious*, all this moreover to the *Righteousness* and *Goodness* of all the Laws he hath given us, is not yet enough to persuade us. Nay, the Testimony of God's own Hand, and mighty Arm, stretch'd out in manifold signs and wonders; the mighty things which he hath done from the beginning of the World to this Day to convince us, that he is the *Lord JEHOVAH*, and governs the whole World by his *Providence*. An universal deluge of Waters, showrs of Fire and Brimstone from Heaven, on the *Ungodly*. The terrible Judgments, and strange Deliverances, by the Hand of *Moses* in *Egypt*, at the *Red Sea*, in the *Wilderness*; the raising of the Dead by the *Prophets*, by *Christ* and his *Apostles*, the *Resurrection* of *JESUS* from the Dead, and his Testimony after that from Heaven, by the sending down of the *Holy Ghost*, and all the *visible Effects* of that unquestionably *Divine Power*. All the wondrous Works recorded in *Holy Scripture* done by no obscure Persons, but Men well known in the World, and persecuted by the World. Works wrought so *publickly*, that whole *Nations* felt the power of some of them, some to their comfort, others to their sorrow. Of others of them, sometimes many *Hundreds* together, sometimes many *Thousands*

Thousands felt the real Benefit; and of others again, all the *Christian* World, at this day, reaps the inestimable Fruits. The whole People of the *Jews* is to this Day a *Living Testimony* of the Truth of *Christ's* Predictions, and Divine Power demonstrated in their Dispersion, and bringing on them and their Children their own Curse when they crucified him. The Testimony of all the most Learned and knowing part of the World in embracing the Doctrine of *Christ*, and of many and many Thousands of *Martyrs* shedding their Blood in defence of it, all this hath not power enough to persuade. The Testimony of but one sent from the *Dead*, is thought of more credit than all these.

Well, we here suppose that such a *Testimony* is given, and that *Lazarus* is come to persuade the *Rich-man's* Brethren to repent. However, it will be good not to be too confident that they will be persuaded by him, till a few things more have been well considered. We have, indeed, no great reason to doubt of it, but that they would be startled a little at this strange sight: They would, in all likelihood, be put besides themselves for a while, a melancholy fit they might fall into, and for musing on what they saw and heard, and the fright they were put into, would not be able to speak to one another. But he knows little of the power of *Lust* in this sort of Men, who would conclude hence, that by this they must needs be convinced, and also converted. Nay, we are rather to think, that when the fright was a little over, what they had seen or heard would have so little Influence on their hearts, that they would be apt enough to fall a laughing at

one another, for being so much affrighted with they knew not what. They who are so incredulous of *divine Revelation*, and laugh at the credulity of *Christians*, will not so easily be made believers, or convinced of the truth of what they have so long ridiculed as *fabulous*, by such an apparition.

First, Have we not some reason to think, considering the Temper of these Men, that instead of believing the Relation made by this Person from the Dead, they would rather question the reality of what they imagined themselves to see and hear? Would they not begin to consult what they call the Oracles of *Reason* and *Philosophy*, and fall a disputing about the possibility of such things as *Spirits* and *Apparitions*, and do what they could, as they had all along been wont to do concerning *Divine Revelation*, to argue themselves into a belief, that there can be no such thing in nature as a *Spirit*, and that the *Apparitions* of such things so much talk'd of are nothing else but the Delusions of an over-busy *Phant'sie*, or the Effects of *Melancholy*, or a sudden fit of *Fearfulness*? And therefore, whatever they had imagined themselves to see or hear, they will conclude upon after-thoughts, that certainly they must be deceived; for by their undoubted Principles of *Reason*, which cannot fail them, there can be no such things in nature as *Spirits*. Their *Liquor*, or their *Meat*, or their excess of *Mirth*, something or other had disordered their *heads* for that time, and they had been like Men in a dream, or in a fever, having their imaginations possessed with very lively Images of impossible things. And tho' the thing hath left, as is not unusual in a dream, so deep an Impression of it self on their minds, that

that they cannot easily reason themselves clear of it, yet they are resolv'd not to *believe* it. Now this hath been so much the reasoning of some of our late most famous *Philosophers*, and celebrated *Wits*, that there can be no absurdity in our supposing, that such an Apparition, and such a Story told by it, that is, by something that called it self the *Spirit*, or *Ghost*, of a dead Man, would have found but little *faith* in those unto whom it was sent.

Secondly, Let us however venture yet a little farther: And let us suppose again, That this *Rich-man's Brethren*, were like many of our modern *Wits*, Men a great deal better acquainted with *sumptuous Fare*, a *joyial Life* of pleasure, the *Laws of Feasts*, and *Rules of Eating and Drinking well*, than with the Principles and Rules of *Philosophy*. That they were too earnestly intent upon the Methods of pampering the Body, and fulfilling the Lusts of the Flesh, to trouble their heads with curious *Speculations* about the nature of *Spirits*, and possibility or impossibility of such real *Apparitions*. We'll suppose them no more than such as our modern *Would-be-Wits*, who think it enough for them to be capable of *Reason* and *Wit* at the *second-hand*, which comes at a *cheaper rate* than what is got with much *study*; and a *Gentleman's Purse* will be at the charge of it, better than his *head*, and it serves his turn every whit as well; that is, it helps him with as much *confidence* to deny a *God*, and *Devils*, and all *Spirits* good or bad, and all *supernatural Revelation*; and to do this without any *bluffing*, and with some *laughte*r, as he finds it *easy*, so he cannot but *admire* himself for it. And to *believe* himself,

tho' he knows not *why*, gives him a great deal of *ease* and *liberty*, and he can Sin *bravely* without a check from his *Conscience* for it. Supposing then these *five Brethren* to be but of this *lower form* of *Irreligion*, which is, in all reason, enough for *Gentlemen*, yet would they be able quickly to *discourse*, or *laugh* themselves out of that *fear*, which they had, it may be, been surprized with. *First*, They would make some question of it, whether this *Lazarus*, whom they once knew well enough to have been *alive*, had indeed ever been *dead*. Why might he not have been secretly *hid*, or *convey'd* out of the way for a time; and to make the World believe he was *dead*, something or other *buried* in his stead? Why might not such a Cheat as this be put upon the World, that whensoever he should have a mind to appear abroad again to those who once knew him, he might be taken for one that was *risen* from the *Dead*, and so the better impose what *fine Stories* he pleas'd on the *Faith* of *credulous Men*? Such *Tricks* as this have sometimes been done, and therefore we may well suppose, that such Men as these would not believe, without some Enquiry and Search into the Truth of *Lazarus* his having been dead. And then, *Secondly*, suppose, That *Lazarus's* Friends do all that is in their power to do, to satisfy them touching his *Death*, they *witness* for him that they *saw* him *die*, and *buried*, and they bring *others* to testify the same. Well, when all this is done, might not these *Gentlemen* again raise another Question, to wit, whether all these had not entred into a *combination* to put a *Trick* upon them. Why might not this be a *Plot* cunningly laid to *abuse* them? Such

Conspiracies

Conspiracies there have been, and why might they not suspect this to be so too? However it was, what better reason could they have to believe *Lazarus* his *Friends* concerning the *Reality* of his *Death*, than they had to believe a great many more far more *credible Witnesses* concerning the *Truth* of the Things recorded in *Holy Scripture*? Wee'll yet go on, and suppose, *Thirdly*, That these Men were convinced that *Lazarus* had been dead. But then supposing this, doth it follow, that they must also believe, that *this Thing* which appeared and spake unto them was *that very Lazarus* who had been dead? Might they not here again be at a stand, and doubt that it might be some other who came in his Name? Suppose they once knew *Lazarus* very well, and thought him that appeared unto them very like him, was this enough to make them believe it was he? May not one Man be very like another, and so be mistaken for another? And might not some such Man be found, who was so like *Lazarus*, that they who saw not *him* and *Lazarus* together, and had been no more intimately acquainted with *Lazarus* than they had been, who may well be supposed not to have been so curious as to take notice of every *Feature* in the Face of a *despicable Beggar*, take one for the other? And might not they who had a mind to abuse them, possibly find out such a Man as this to abuse them with, and hire him to be their Tool to that end? Such a Thing might be, and therefore they who disbelieve the *Holy Scripture* for this Reason, because they suppose it not *impossible* that it may be false, might, for the same reason, not believe this to be *Lazarus*, for they could not think it

impossible

impossible, that it might be some other like him. They might suspect him for an *Impostor*, and a cunning *Jugler* coming either of his own Accord, or sent in by some others, who had hired him to put them into a fright.

I do not see, how Men of their Principles, who will not be satisfied with any thing less than that which excludes all *possibility* of the contrary, could be convinc'd that this was *Lazarus*, or any other from the Dead; unless they were first satisfy'd, that it was *really* the Ghost or Spirit of *Lazarus* without any *Body*. For, as long as they perceiv'd any thing of a *Body*, they would still suspect some *trick* or *juggle* in it, knowing what Feats of that kind have been, and may again be done by the art of decivers. Therefore,

Thirdly, We will proceed in our concessions, and suppose that these Brethren were no *Sadducees*, who own'd neither *Angel* or *Spirit*, nor any *immaterial Substance*. We will suppose them to believe that there are Spirits. And so I think it necessary to suppose they must, before they could be persuaded by one who pretended to come from the *Dead*. But then tho' they believ'd that there were *Spirits*, and more than so, that *this thing* that now appear'd unto them was *one* of those *Spirits*: Yet, might they not think themselves oblig'd to believe all that such a *Spirit* should tell them, as a certain truth. Why must they believe this *Spirit* upon his own bare word. Are there not *evil* and *malicious Spirits*, as well as *good* ones? And how shall they distinguish the *one* from the *other*? Or, how shall they know of *which* of the two sorts this *Spirit* is? Why may he not be *one* of those *malicious Spirits*, which
envy

envy the present *happiness* of Men here in this World, and hating them, endeavour all they can to make their life *miserable*, and them weary of it; and would therefore fright them with a *lie* out of their *pleasant* way of living, that they may spend the remaining part of their time in *sorrow* and *sadness*? If it be said, that this was the *Spirit* of *Lazarus*, who was known to be a very *good Man*, and therefore cannot be suspected to have any such *malicious design* against them. Might they not ask again, how they could be sure of that? Might not an *evil Spirit* call himself *Lazarus*? May not one *Spirit*, for ought we know, be like another, that is, appear in the same likeness? And, is it easy to conceive, that if a *Spirit* can appear in the likeness of a living Man, than some of these *malicious Spirits* might appear in the likeness of *Lazarus*, as well as of any other Man? But suppose it were indeed the *Ghost* of *Lazarus*: How, might they say, can we be sure, that *Lazarus* was indeed so good a Man, as Men took him for? Why might he not have been a *close Hypocrite*, notwithstanding all his seeming *Piety*? And if so, as he might be so, for ought that any Man can tell, why may not the *Ghost* of *Lazarus* be one of those *lying Spirits*, seeing his whole life was (for ought we know) a *lie*? *Lazarus*, 'tis true, found but little respect and kindness from our Brethren or us in his life time, and he may, 'tis very likely now, remember it, and study how to be reveng'd on us for it. He *envied* our happiness then, because he wanted it; and it may be is yet tormented with thoughts of it, and in this *spiteful* and *malicious* way he labours to fright us out of those

those pleasures, which he himself would always fain have enjoy'd, but could not. He has, 'tis possible, a *particular Quarrel* with our *Brother*, who is now *Dead*, and he would now persuade us, and all the World, to have a very ill Opinion of all such Men as he was, and make us believe that all such shall be miserable when they die, lying (as he saith he saw him lie) in torments. We have, however, yet but the bare word of *one Spirit* for all this, and whether it be a *true* or a *lying Spirit* none can assure us. However, it is the Spirit of our Enemy, if he call himself by a right Name; one that we have reason to think, bears us no good Will. He tells us, that the *Spirits* of such as we are, shall be *tormented*; he had, indeed, heard this often enough told us by those who pretended to *minister* to our *Souls*, and hath not his lesson now to learn. He knows it may be, that there are no torments at all in another World, but that all Souls are there alike, and fare no worse one than another; only he has a mind to be reveng'd on us, if he can, for not relieving him heretofore; and he has no other way to do it, but to persuade us to lose all our present pleasures. Suppose now another *Spirit* should appear to us, and call himself by the Name of our late dear *Brother*; whether he should *contradict* or *confirm* all that this had told us, we should still be at as great an uncertainty as ever. For whether he were the *true Spirit* of our *Brother*, or any other *Spirit*, and whether *good* or *bad*, we could not know. And therefore should he tell us all over again the same Story that this hath told us, it might still, for ought we could tell, be a forged tale of a *malicious Spirit*; and if

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he should *contradict* it all, what reason could we have to believe rather the *one affirming*, than the *other denying* all ? That both shou'd so speak *truth* it cannot be ; and which to believe, whilst they say *contrary* things, we could not tell.

To me it seems very plain, That whosoever is not *beforehand*, some way or other reasonably well satisfied of this main point, That the *Souls* of *Good men* are in a *comfortable* State after Death, and feel so much the happiness of being *good*, that they will never become *evil* ; cannot be *convinc'd*, that there is any such future State of *happiness* or *misery*, by the *testimony* of a *Soul* sent unto him from the dead. And if so, it is a very *needless* and *impertinent* Errand for such a *Soul* to be sent upon, to *do* what is already *done* to *convince* one of what he was before *convinc'd*.

If I believe there can be no such things as *Spirits*, how shall a *Spirit's* appearing to me convince me of it ? He cannot appear *visibly* to me but in some kind of *bodily form* and *shape* ; and whilst to me he looks like a *body*, how should his *appearance* convince me, that he is a *Spirit* ? If I take it for a *body*, how shall I be *convinc'd*, that it is the very *body* of that dead *Man*, in whose *likeness* it appears to me, knowing that the *body* of that *Man* lies rotting in the Earth ? If I believe that there be *Spirits*, and that this is the *Spirit* of that *good Man*, I once knew, or if I believe it is *he*, whether *Soul*, or *Body*, or both ; it is not this *appearance* of him to me, and his *testimony*, of himself which brought me to this belief, unless I was before *convinc'd*, that *good Men* continue always *good*, and will not deceive me by a *lie*, or cheat me by a delusion.

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We must therefore, to give some credit to the testimony of one thus sent from the dead, suppose *Fourthly*, That these *Brethren* were before this *satisfied*, that good Men continue good Men after Death, and are happy in Goodness, and with weil to all Men upon the Earth, and are ready to do them good as they are permitted by God. And if it were so, then what must *Lazarus* be sent to do? *Moses* and the *Prophets* had taught them this, and the Holy *Scripture* is enough to keep it fresh in their Memories. And the things then recorded as done to win and confirm their belief, were incomparably many and great, beyond what cou'd be expected from one coming from the Dead. The testimony of *Lazarus* is no more, but the testimony of one Man, and tho' he was sent from the dead to testify, yet could they have no reason to believe him, if they did not before-hand believe the main point, which he was sent to testify. Such a testimony must therefore be *needless* and *vain*. It was *needless* to convince them, who were before convinc'd; and it was *vain* to endeavour thus to convince them, who could not thus be convinc'd.

And now supposing them before-hand convinc'd of this truth, That there is a *twofold future State of Men after Death*, such as in Holy *Scripture* we read of, what work was there left for *Lazarus* to do? A great deal, indeed, and too much for him to do by his *testifying* unto them. Tho' they believ'd all the things recorded in the Holy *Scripture*, yet did they not *repent*, as in the holy *Scripture* they are commanded to do, and his great work was to *persuade* them to *repent*. Let us then, in the *next* place see, if the thing

thing recorded in *Holy Scripture*, when believ'd, be not as sufficient to persuade Men to repentance, as such a *testimony* of one from the *Dead*.

1. Neither could *Lazarus*, nor any other tell us any more to persuade us by, than hath been told us in the *Holy Scripture*. All that such an one could do more, is to make known to us his own *Experience* of those Things, and to tell us, that he hath felt, what in the *Scripture* we are told such Men shall feel. Now if we did believe before, that such Things shall be felt after *Death*, his *Testimony* of his own *Experience* serveth, at most, but to confirm us in the belief of what we believed before. And if we did not believe them before, his *Testimony* could persuade us to nothing, till we were well assur'd of his being what he pretended to be, and of his honest Intentions to inform and not deceive us. The *Belief* to be procured is the same, the *Things* to be believ'd are the same, they are no new unheard of Things he is to convince us of, and therefore we had before he came the same motives to repentance, which he now brings with him.

Nay, if we believe the *Scripture*, we have there far stronger motives to repentance, than any one's coming from the *Dead* can offer to us. We have *God's own word* for it, his *Promises* to the *Penitent*, his *Menaces* against the *Impenitent*. We have one greater than *Lazarus* after his *Death* testifying from *Heaven* unto us. The eternal *Son of God*, who in our Nature bare our *Sorrows*; who felt in his own human *Soul and Body*, the heavy burden of our *Sins*, and of *God's fierce Wrath* kindled against 'em; who was in the *Sense* hereof before his *Death*, in an *Agony*, sweating as it were
great

great drops of Blood; who was so sorrowful even unto Death, with the dreadful apprehension of the short Torments, he was to undergo for our Sins, that he used strong Cries and Tears, praying again and again, and the third time more earnestly, that if it was possible, that Cup might pass from him; and at last cried with a loud Voice, dying on the Cross for our Sins. And is not his Testimony, who suffer'd all this in his own Person for us, of more power to persuade us to repentance, than the Testimony of one such as Lazarus? He arose again from the dead, and appeared to Hundreds, and went up visibly into Heaven, and sent thence the Holy Ghost, and by Him, enabled the Apostles to testify unto us in the demonstration of the Spirit and of Power, and to persuade us to believe and repent, and not to venture on a sinful course of Life, and thereby on eternal Torments. And is not this Testimony of Christ risen from the Dead, and of many who came out of their Graves, when he arose and appeared to many, and of others afterwards restored to Life again by his Apostles in his Name, of more force to move us to repentance than the Testimony of one Lazarus? Could Lazarus say, Repent, for I have shed my Blood on the Cross, and am at my Father's right Hand by my powerful intercession, to obtain for you the benefit and grace of Repentance? Repent, for I have suffer'd in my own Soul a great part of those Torments which are due to Sinners, and have Experience how intollerable they are, on purpose, that you repenting may never suffer the Torments of Hell? Repent, for I have procured the Holy Ghost to assist you, and to comfort you, and to prepare you for, and guide you to Heaven, where now I am interceding for you?

What

What could any one from the Dead plead with us comparable to this? What need then of one from the *Dead* to persuade, or how should such an one persuade us to repent, if all this will not do it?

3. After all, it is to be feared, that such a *Repentance* as this Testimony of one coming from the *Dead* might persuade one to, would do us little good, nor indeed deserve the Name of *Repentance*. It would but too much resemble the *late repentance* of a *dying Man*, the *Sincerity* whereof may well be *suspected*, and how it will be *accepted* of, no Man can tell. The *Repentance* whereby one may escape the *Torments* of *Hell* implies a *Love* to *God* and *Holiness*; and the Holy Scripture, furnisheth us with all sorts of Reasons proper to persuade us unto this. A *new frame* of *Heart*, a right *Heavenly Temper* of *Mind*, a *change* of our *Affections*, and taking them off from Things *carnal* and *Earthly*, and setting them on *God*, and on both the *Service* and *Promises* of *God* are implied in true and *effectual Repentance*. And if the astonishing *Love* of *God*, and of our Lord *JESUS Christ*, as offered in the *Scripture* to our *Consideration*; and if all the *precious* and *glorious Promises* sealed in the *Blood* of a *dear* and *dying Saviour*; and if the *beauty* of *Holiness*, and the *intrinsic goodness* of the *Holy* and *Heavenly Religion* taught us, will not all wean our *Affections* from the *World*, and the *Flesh*, *Sin* and *Vanity*, and engage them to *God* and *Goodness*; how is it possible to imagine that a *Story* told us by one whom we supposed to come from the *Dead* should do it? Indeed I doubt not, but such a Thing as this would a little *disturb* us, and make us *afraid*, and it may be, for a while,

while send us to our *Prayers*, we would, it may be, fear lest the *Ghost* were come to tell us we must die, and so put us into just the same kind of *affrightment*, as the apprehension of *Death* just at hand is wont to put *wicked Men* into. In Summe, such a *Spirit* might tell us very dreadful Stories of *Hell* and *Damnation*, and make us afraid of coming thither, and cast about which way to escape the *Torments* of it, and work some *change* in our *Lives*, and we would possibly be of a little more *sober Behaviour*. But alas, how far short doth all this come of *Repentance* unto *Life*? For all the *change* that is made in our *Affections* is no more, but a *Slavish fear* of being *tormented* in *Hell*. Could such an one, do we think, so describe the *Joy* and *Blessedness* of *Heaven* to us, as to bring us in *love* with them? Never think it, he might tell us indeed, what it is that *he* and other *Saints* of *God* *rejoice* in, and how great and unexpressible their *Joy* is. And all this we have been often told of; but still the same difficulty remains, that is, how to *persuade* us to think those Things fit to be *rejoiced* in, or to bring us to *love* them so, as we shall indeed *rejoice* in them. *Joy* we long for, and cannot think our selves happy in any Thing but *that*. But we know as well that we can have no *Joy* in that which we *love* not, and what shall *persuade* us to *love* what is to be the Object of our *Joy*? Our *pleasure* and *delight* is altogether in those Things which *Heaven* affords not. And the Thing which the *Saints* there *rejoice* in, we perfectly *bate*. The *perfecting* and *exercising* of our human *Faculties*, by the *knowing* and *enjoying* of *God* in perfect *Holiness*, is a thing, which if we do

do not *hate*, yet whilst *wicked*, we have no manner of Sense of, as of a thing *lovely*, and to be rejoiced in. How then shall any thing that one from the Dead can tell us, even tho' we believe him to speak the Truth, persuade us to *Repentance*, that is, to love the Things which we *bate*, and to *bate* the Things which we *love*? It may make us *forbear*, or do something for fear of *Punishment*, but never to serve God heartily in love to Him and *Holiness*. All that he could tell us, God himself hath already told us, and yet, tho' we suppose all true which he hath told us, we never could find any thing so pleasant and lovely to us, as to make it our free choice.

By all which it appears, that the *Rich Man's* Request was very *impertinent* and *unreasonable*; and that *Abraham* had all the reason in the World to reject it, and to commend to his *Brethren* the hearing to the Holy Scripture, as the best means of bringing them to *Repentance*.

Let us therefore make good use of the Holy Scripture, which in much goodness it hath pleas'd God to give us as a sure light unto our Paths. Let us be heartily *thankful* to God for his Goodness in calling us into this marvelous Light. Let us order our *Lives* and *Conversation* by this sure Rule, in all *Godliness*, *Righteousness* and *Sobriety*, so may we comfortably look for the *blest hope*, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour JESUS Christ. He that thus diligently useth the holy Scripture, as the Rule of his *Faith* and *Life*, shall not want the *blessing* of God upon his pious Endeavours, but may

make himself sure of the *Spirit of Christ* to guide him to his *Rest* with *Lazarus* in *Peace* and *Joy*. Let us therefore most humbly beseech God in the Name of our *Lord JESUS Christ*, to grant, that by the *conduct* of his *Word*, and *Holy Spirit*, we may be duly *qualified* for any State unto which God shall call us to in this Life, whether it be *Riches* or *Poverty*, *Sickness* or *Health*, *Honour* or *Disgrace*, that we may so pass through Things temporal; of what sort soever they be, that we finally lose not the Things eternal. *Amen.*

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PARABLE
OF THE
Unjust STEWARD.

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(22)

make himself part of the Spirit of Christ to guide
him to his Father in Peace and Joy.
Let us then, with a joyful heart, God in the
Name of our Father, Jesus Christ, to whom, and
by the power of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Conclude with the Lord's Prayer, whether it be
in the morning or evening, or at any other time.
The Lord's Prayer is the best of all prayers, and
the one which we should always use.

PARABLE

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UNJUST STEWARD.

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63

account of the stewardship; for thou wast
be no longer steward.

And the steward said within himself,
What shall I do; for my Lord taketh away
from me the stewardship; I cannot dig, to
beg I am ashamed.

THE

PARABLE

So he called every one of his Lord's
Debtors unto him, and said unto the first,
How much owest thou my Lord?

OF THE

And he said, an hundred measures of Oyl.
And he said unto him, Well, and how much owest thou my Lord?
And he said, an hundred measures of Wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy
Bill, and write down for me.

Then said he to another, and how much owest thou? And he said, an hundred measures of Wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy
Bill, and write down for me.

St. LUKE XVI. 1. &c.

And the Lord commended the unjust steward,
There was a certain rich Man which had
a steward; and the same was accused unto
him, that he had wasted his goods.

And he called him, and said unto him:
How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an

account of thy Stewardship; for thou maist
be no longer Steward.

3. And the Steward said within himself.
What shall I do? For my Lord taketh away
from me the Stewardship; I cannot dig, to
beg I am ashamed.
4. I am resolved what to do, that when I am
put out of the Stewardship, they may receive
me into their Houses.
5. So he called every one of his Lord's
Debtors unto him, and said unto the first,
How much owest thou unto my Lord?
6. And he said, an hundred Measures of Oyl.
And he said unto him, Take thy Bill, and
sit down quickly, and write Fifty.
7. Then said he to another, and how much owest
thou? And he said, An hundred measures of
Wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy
Bill, and write Fourscore.
8. And the Lord commended the unjust Steward,
because he had done wisely; for the Children
of this World are in their generation wiser
than the Children of light.
9. And I say unto you, make to your selves
Friends of the mammon of unrighteousness;
that

that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

THere be two very dangerous *Rocks* in our way to Heaven by *JESUS Christ*, which it behoves us all, as we would be saved by him, most carefully to shun, I mean, *Despair* and *Presumption*. We are to fear God's wrath; but we must also believe his goodness, and hope for his mercy. We must hope well; but we must also repent of our Sins, and be cautious how we wilfully offend, and break his Commandments. To fear without hope, and to persuade our selves, that God will not have mercy on us, tho' we repent, is to despair. And to hope, without repenting, and carefully keeping God's Laws, is to presume; and either of these two ways we shall lose the benefit of a Saviour, and ruin our selves to all eternity.

In the foregoing Chapter our blessed *JESUS* hath in three *Parables* taught us, how little cause the very worst of Sinners have to despair of God's mercy, and gracious acceptance, when they sincerely repent, and return to their Obedience. And because we are generally too apt to turn his Grace into Wantonness, and by making an ill use of God's mercy, and all the encouragements which he gives us to serve him cheerfully, to undo our selves by growing too careless in our behaviour towards him; therefore our blessed Saviour here in another *Parable* gives us a very seasonable warning to take heed of this presumption.

And

And the Thing that he would principally here teach us is this, That we should endeavour to contrive as *wisely* for our *eternal happiness* in the other World, as the Men of this World, that is, Worldly Men are wont to do for the Things they love, as conducing (in their Opinion at least) to their *present happiness* in this Life. That we should take as much care to provide well for our Souls, as Men usually do in providing for their Bodies; who, tho' they have good hopes of obtaining what they labour for, yet are not encourag'd thereby to grow *careless* in their business, but rather use the greater *diligence*; and not only are the more *cheerfully industrious*, but also the more *cautious*, lest through *stolt* or *negligence* they should be disappointed of their Designs. And more particularly our blessed JESUS would here teach us to make a good use of our *Worldly Wealth*, and wisely and faithfully to husband it, in what proportion soever we enjoy it; that so it may be no hindrance, but rather a help to us in our way to *Blessedness*, and that we may not be the less happy in the other World, for our having been rich in this.

And he said also to his Disciples; so beginneth this Chapter. In the beginning of the former we are told, That it was to the Scribes and Pharisees he then spake. Their murmurs, that he suffered a *Publican* and *Sinner*, to be his Auditors, and *Guests*, or *Entertainers*, rather, saying, *This Man receiveth Sinners, and eateth with them*. Hence took he occasion in these *Parables* to shew them the goodness of God to all penitent Sinners; and the care he took to seek Sinners out, to make them penitent; so that the very *Publicans* and such other Sinners as the proud *Pharisees* despis'd, need-
ed

ed not to *despair* of God's Mercy, and gracious Acceptance; if they sincerely *repented* of their Sins. And now, having thus Instructed the *Pharisees and Scribes*, he here turneth his Discourse to his *Disciples*, laying something also to *them* very fit for them to learn.

We pretend to be *Christians*, that is, the *Disciples* and followers of *Christ*. What he here in this *Parable* said unto his *Disciples*, we are to look upon as said to all *Christians*. Let us then suppose our selves, as we ought to be, his *Disciples*; and that we now hear him thus speaking unto us.

' All you that *believe* in me your Saviour, and
' have *repented* of all your Sins, resolving to live
' in *Obedience* to my Gospel; go on with all Cou-
' rage and *Chearfulness* in the way which I have
' taught you to walk in; and never fear but the
' end of it will be eternal Life. Let not any Sins
' which heretofore you have committed, but now
' have forsaken, of what sort soever they were,
' or how long soever in the days of your *Ignorance*
' they have been practised by you, *dawns*
' or *dishearten* you; for your heavenly Father
' hath by me his only begotten Son, call'd you to
' *repentance*, and *reconciled* you to himself, and
' is most willing to receive you into favour,
' and to feast you with all his choice Blessings,
' and there is joy in Heaven, in the presence of the
' *Angels of God*, over one Sinner that repenteth. But
' now remember, that the more gracious God
' your Father is, so much the more careful ought
' you to be, to behave your selves towards him
' like thankful and dutiful Children. Take heed
' how ye *presume*, because he hath once pardon'd
' you, and receiv'd you into Favour after a very
' wicked

wicked life, that you shall continue in his fa-
 vour, tho' you return again to your old *waste-
 ful, prodigal and swinish* course of Life; as if I
 had come to grant you a *License* to live as you
 please, and to assure you, that you shall never be
 call'd on to give an *Account* unto God of your
 behaviour here. Know therefore, that you are
 to own your selves the Servants of that great
 God, who governeth all the World in Righte-
 ousness, who is *my God, and your God; my Fa-
 ther, and your Father*; and for my sake it is,
 who am *his beloved Son in whom he is well pleas'd*,
 that he is pleas'd to grant unto you the benefit
 of *Repentance*. I have undertaken as *Mediator*
 between my *Father* and you *Sinners*, to make
 your *Peace* with him; but you may be sure of
 it, I am always as tender of *his Honour*, as of your
Salvation. I have, indeed, prevail'd to make
 your *Yoke and Burden* much *easier and lighter*
 than they were before, but I never design'd to
 exempt you from the *reasonable Service* that you
 owe unto God; unto whom the more *easy*
 that I have made your *Service*, and the more
helps I have assur'd you of, and the *clearer*
promises of a glorious Reward I have given
 you; so much the surer are you to be call'd to
 give an *Account*, and so much the severer *Judg-
 ment* are you like to meet with if you be found
 faulty. If then you take not care to *walk wor-
 thy of the vocation wherewith you are call'd*, and
 to live so, as to be able to give a good *Account*
 of your Behaviour in this World, such as I
 have told you will, for my sake, be accepted
 of, how much short do you come in *common*
Prudences of the Men of this World, which they
 shew in their management of the ordinary Af-
 fairs

'fairs of this Life? You will be the better able
'to judge of your folly, by considering this *Si-*
'*milisude* or *Comparison* which now I make use
'of to illustrate it unto you.

'Suppose then (which is a thing obvious
'enough) That a *Rich Man* have admitted one
'into his Family to serve him therein; and is
'pleas'd to intrust him with the Management of
'some considerable Portion of his Estate, expect-
'ing that he shall observe the orders which he
'gives him, and be faithful to him in impro-
'ving all things committed to his charge, to his
'Honour and Use, assuring him of a sufficient
'Reward at the end of his Service, as well as
'of a very plentiful and comfortable livelihood
'in the mean time. And now after all this,
'suppose that this Servant proves an *unjust* and
'*unfaithful Steward* to his Master who had shewn
'him so much kindness, and begins to *waste his*
'*Master's Goods*, as tho' they were his own, and
'he himself were the only Master of them, free
'to dispose of all according to his own Mind,
'and accountable to no body for what he did
'with any thing. Now tho' this Man, so long
'as his Master seem'd to him to take no Notice
'of his Misdemeanour in his Office, nor so much
'as once check'd him, or frown'd upon him for
'it, may be so hurried on by his impetuous lusts,
'as to go on securely in his wicked ways of
'spending his *Lord's Goods*, and forget that he
'hath a Master, to whom he must give an Ac-
'count whenever he thinks fit to call him to it;
'yet, I believe you cannot think, that his Ma-
'ster will always wink at his knavery, and never
'check him for it. The least that you can think
'fit for him to do, is to call this careless Fellow
'to

' to him, and to threaten him, if he mend not
 ' his Manners, and become not more faithful to
 ' him, to turn him out of his Service, and to send
 ' him to shift for himself as he can. Yea, will
 ' he not (do you think) set him a day, com-
 ' manding him then to bring in his Accounts to
 ' be Examined by him, that he may see what
 ' Service or Disservice he hath done him? And
 ' if he find him unfit to be trusted any longer
 ' with his Goods, will he not bid him deliver
 ' them up, provide for himself, and be gone?
 ' And will not this unfaithful *Steward* thus
 ' threat'ned by his *Lord* with the loss of his place,
 ' and in that, of his whole livelihood, if he have
 ' not quite besotted himself, but have any wit at
 ' all left him, begin to consider into what a con-
 ' dition he hath now brought himself? Will he
 ' not, think you, set all his Wits on Work to
 ' contrive some way or other, whereby he may
 ' yet hope to live in the World? Yes, you may
 ' be sure of it, that being one, who is in love
 ' with the things of this World, and having in
 ' him no principles of Justice and Honesty, he
 ' will have as many Projects in his Head, as his
 ' Wit can help him to; and by all the fetches and
 ' shifts, good or bad, that he can invent, try what
 ' may be done, not only to keep himself alive,
 ' but to live as plentifully and pleasantly too as
 ' possibly he can. If he can find no way to re-
 ' gain his Master's favour, and by that to recover
 ' his place, wherein he might serve himself, ra-
 ' ther than his Master as before; yet, he will
 ' try what he can do to insinuate himself into the
 ' Affections of his Master's Debtors, by making
 ' them as dishonest as himself, and as cunning
 ' too in cheating his Master of his due; that so
 ' both

* both *he* and *they* may live the more merrily by
 * the Arts of knavery he hath taught them.
 * You cannot but observe every where, how *wise*
 * and *shifty* these *Worldlings* are in fetching a-
 * bout their *Worldly Designs*; and this is by ma-
 * ny accounted a very *wise* part in them. What
 * *Fools* then will you appear, if having so glorious
 * a design in Hand, as that of obtaining a *Crown*
 * of *Righteousness in Heaven*, which you may wear
 * for ever; you use not much more *Care, Dili-*
 * *gence, Contrivance, and Industry* in pleasing God,
 * by whose Service you must come to that blessed
 * State? What a *madness* will it be in you, to
 * live *carelessly, wasting* all the *Goods* he hath given
 * you a charge to *improve*; and to take no care
 * how to keep in his favour, and to have your
 * *Accounts* always ready? Especially seeing you
 * know you must shortly die, and by the *Account*
 * which you shall then be able to give, must stand
 * or fall in the day of *Judgment*.

The main design of our blessed Saviour in this
 Parable being thus opened; we will now consi-
 der the *particulars* therein contain'd, as they come
 in order. Only this one thing I think fit to be
 premis'd, That tho' the main scope of the Para-
 ble is that which we are principally to regard; and
 we cannot ground any necessary Doctrine of
Faith or *Manners*, on any expressions herein us'd,
 or passages occurring in it, otherwise than it is
 countenanced by that principal Design: Yet, see-
 ing the chief Scope of this Parable is, to teach us
 to be as *wise* for the things of a better Life, as the
 Men of this World are for the things of this Life;
 I think this to be warrant enough for us, from
 any one single Passage or Expression to enter on a
 Medi-

Meditation which may be useful to promote our great design of being *happy* in a better World. For this, I am sure, is the *wisdom* of *worldly Men*, to take all *occasions* and *hins* of promoting their *worldly Ends*.

The beginning of the *Parable* is this,

Verse 1.

There was a certain Rich Man.

WE cannot be Ignorant, That there are many *Rich Men* in the World, nor that such *Rich Men* are wont to have *Stewards*, neither that some of these *Stewards* are unfaithful in their Office, and waste the Goods of their *Masters*. This then is not the principal thing that our blessed *Saviour* would here commend to our observation. This *Rich Man* is here made use of, to put us in mind of a *Rich GOD*. As a *Rich Man* hath a great *Family*, and a great *Estate*, whereof he is *Lord* and *Master*, and disposeth of them as he pleaseth, and entertains as many *Servants* as he sees good, assigning every one his *Station*, and his *Work*, and his *Reward*; so are we to consider *God* as the *Lord* and *Master* of the whole *Family in Heaven and Earth*. His all things are, and at his disposal they are, and he appoints unto all *Angels* and *Men* their several *Ministeries* and *Offices*, and ordereth all things according to the good pleasure of his Will.

This

This is necessary to be believ'd, and much thought on. That we live in the Family, and under the Command, and are maintain'd and fed by the Providence of GOD. And that, as there is such a *Lord*, whose we are, on whom we depend, and whom we are to serve according to his Will; so, for our Comfort and Encouragement, we serve a *Master* who is *infinitely Rich*, and, as we shall see anon, as *Good* as *Rich*. He is the only one, who is *Rich in*, and *of himself*, who oweth nothing to any other, who needeth nothing from any other, from whom all things come, to whom they are all owing. He is the living and inexhaustible Spring and Fountain of all *Being* and *Goodness*, the eternal I AM. *Exod. 3, 14. There is none Good but one, that is GOD. Mat. 19, 17.* He then is wonderfully *Rich*.

1. In the satisfactory enjoyment of *Himself* eternally, to whom nothing can be added, from whom nothing can be raken; eternally, indefectibly the same, yesterday, and to day, and for ever; to himself eternally sufficient, in himself perfectly blessed. In all the Perfections of Being, Power, Wisdom and Goodness, immense, uncontrollable, unalterable, infinite, independent, incomprehensibly, and therefore inexpressibly glorious, boundless and endless.

2. He is *Rich* in the voluntary and free causation and production of all things. He is the *LORD* who made Heaven and Earth, the Sea, and all things that are therein. *Act. 14, 15. Who giveth to all Life, and Breath, and all things. Act. 17, 25. In him we live, and move, and have our Being. v. 28, O LORD, how manifold are thy Works, in Wisdom*

hast thou made them all, the Earth is full of thy Riches. Psal. 104. 24. He made the Earth, and created Man upon it; He even his Hands stretched out the Heavens, and all their host hath he Commanded. Psal. 45. 12. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Honour and Glory, and Power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. Rev. 4. 11. Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be Glory for ever. Amen. Rom. 11. 34.

3. He is Rich in the actual Possession of all things. The Heavens are thine, and the Earth also is thine; as for the World, and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them. Psal. 89. 11. The Earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof, the World, and they that dwell therein. Psal. 24. 1.

He is Rich in the free disposal, and liberal distribution of all things, as it seems good unto his Divine Majesty. He prepareth Rain for the Earth; He maketh Grass to grow upon the Mountains; He giveth to the Beast his Food, and to the young Ravens when they cry. Psal. 147. 8, 9. Thou openest thine Hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. Psal. 145. 16. He maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil, and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just, and on the Unjust. Mat. 5. 45. He giveth us richly all things to enjoy. 1. Tim. 6. 17. He is Rich unto all that call upon him. Rom. 10. 12. Thine, O LORD, is the Greatness, and the Power, and the Glory, and the Victory, and the Majesty; for all that is in the Heavens, and in the Earth, is thine; thine is the Kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both Riches and Honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all,
and

and in thine hand is power and might, and in thine hand it is to make Great, and to give strength unto all. 1 Chron. 29. 11, 12.

He that hath within himself, and of his own, enough for himself, and for all the World, and hath the absolute command, and free disposing of all that he hath, and is never the poorer for whatever he useth or giveth, must needs be very rich. And such an one is God the LORD of us, and of all the World, and therefore the Rich Man here is not unfitly made use of by our Saviour to mind us of him,

And yet we must here remember, That no similitude whatsoever can be used to this purpose, which can any more than very faintly, and imperfectly resemble GOD. To whom shall we liken GOD? Or what likeness shall we compare unto him? Isa. 40. 18. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? Saith the Holy one. v. 50. The Richest Man upon Earth, suppose him Solomon in the height of all his Wealth and Glory, is a poor beggerly Worm, in comparison of the rich God. The most accomplished Man is but of a finite nature, and limited perfection. Whatever he hath, he owes it to another; and is the absolute owner or disposer of nothing that he hath, any more than he was the Author or Maker of it; he hath it but for a limited time, and is accountable for all Things to God of whom he received them. But GOD is the absolute LORD of all Things, and of the Rich Man, as much as of any other; and all Things are provided for, and preserved by him, and are govern'd and dispos'd of by no other Rule, but what his own Wisdom and Goodness hath prescribed, and

greably to his own most perfect nature, and that which he hath given them.

The contemplation of this richness of God is a necessary Duty, and may be of excellent use to us many ways.

First, The consideration of the fulness and riches of the Divine Nature, will teach us to give unto GOD the Honour due unto his Name; that is, to behave our selves in all Things Religiously towards him. When we think on him as infinitely perfect in himself, and as the only Spring of all Being and Blessedness; we must needs feel our Obligations to him, our Dependance on him, and the necessity which lieth upon us to please him in all Things. The richness of GOD, or the very excellency of all Perfections which is in him, is the Foundation of a Natural Religion; and we are the most unnatural Things in the World, if we live not Religiously, when we have so much reason as to be sensible what kind of Being God is. If there be any such things as Admiration, Adoration and Praise, to what can they be all due, if not to an infinite and immense Being, absolutely perfect in Power, Wisdom and Goodness. What is to be ador'd and worshipp'd with the most profound Humility and Devotion, if the great Author, and cause of all Things, the inexhaustible Fountain of all, that is, or can be in the World, be not so? What is to be revered, if not infinite Majesty? What can we stand in awe of, if not of irresistible Power? What may be confided in, if not infallible Knowledge and Wisdom? What can be loved and delighted in, if not perfect and unabateable Goodness?

To

To whom should we pray, if not to the Sovereign Disposer of all Things? To whom should we offer our Sacrifices of Thanksgiving, but to the universal Benefactor of the World? Whom should we obey, but the wise Governor, the Omnipotent Lord, and gracious Feeder and Protector of all Things? To whom should we entirely resign our selves, if not to our Almighty Maker, rightful Owner? In what can we take up our rest, if not in the chief Good? The Riches of God, duly consider'd, makes all this to be our natural Duty to him.

Secondly, This teacheth us, which is the very best course that any one can possibly take, that he may become *sincerely* Religious. Nothing in the World is more like to persuade us to be in good earnest God's faithful Servants, and to make us afraid how we dally with him, and mock him by an Hypocritical Profession of Religion, than the serious meditating on the *Riches*, or infinite Perfections of his Nature. When we consider the total Dependence which we and all Things have upon him, even as far as to our very Being, this, if any thing, will make us serious, and in good earnest in all the Services which we perform unto him. When we remember, That neither we, ourselves, nor any thing else can any longer be, or act, than he is pleas'd to uphold, and enable us: That nothing hath any power to do us good, if he be not with it to bless it; that nothing can be hinder'd from hurting us, if he prevent it not: When we consider the emptiness and vanity of all Things without him; this, if any thing, will persuade us to be in earnest to please him. Let us think seriously that we are God's

own, whether we be willing or unwilling to be so; and that he will use us as his own, and do what pleaseth himself with us, whether we be contented with it or no, whether we do actually resign our selves to his Will and Disposal or no; and that our voluntary and sincere devoting ourselves to his Service, is the only Thing that can assure us, that he will deal graciously with us, and enrich us as we desire with his Blessing. Will not this, if any thing, make us give up our selves in good earnest? It may be we have long dissembled with God, and yet he hath not put us out of his Family, nor out of his care; but we have been suffer'd to live in the World, and he hath provided for us in it. It may be so, I grant; but are sure, that as we have a place, yet in his Family, we have a place also in his favour? That as we have yet a place there, so we shall have a place there long? God is rich towards all, and all that live, have, whilst they live, some share in the Provision he makes for his great Family. But if whilst dissembling with God, we share in the ordinary Provision made for all in general, are we also sure we shall share in the Inheritance, which, according to the riches of his Goodness, he hath provided and reserv'd in Heaven for his Children? Why will we content our selves with a worse share, when we may have a better? Is it possible we should be so foolish, as to hope our dissimulation should be hid from Omniscience? Can we be so impudent as to sin, when we remember God to be present with us? Can we have such Blasphemous Thoughts of him, as to think he will not be offended at our Hypocrisy? Dare we provoke omnipotent Justice to vindicate it self against our Mockery? Well, think of it in earnest?

earnest? Could we ever have been at all had
not God given us Being? Can we subsist one Mi-
nute longer if he preserve us not? Can we have
any Thing but what he gives us? Can we think
that God sends us little by his Bounty, as to suffer
us always to be his debtors, and never call us to an ac-
count for it? How then dare we dissemble with
God, and not be as his scrupulously Religious? and T

as a doted man, devoted himself, and devoted
Thirdly, What an encouragement have we here
from this Consideration to go on cheerfully in
the service of God, and to be sincerely religi-
ous? We are sure that we serve a rich Master,
one that is able abundantly to reward, and En-
rich us? I confess, That to have a rich Master
is no Encouragement, to a good Servant, if he
be not a good Master too. If a rich Master be a
wicked Man, if he be proud or covetous, im-
pious or churlish, profane and debauched, a
Man of no Conscience, Honesty, nor Sobriety
if he be one that considereth not that he him-
self hath a Master in Heaven, to whom he is
more a Servant, than any one can be to him:
if he remember not that he who is his Servant
may be the Lord's free man, and if he use him
as such, taking care that he may serve the LORD,
still he serves him, then may it be better for
one to beg his Bread, than to be such a Man's
Servant. But here lieth our Encouragement to
serve God, That his rich is all Goodness, as
well as his Master of the whole World. We are
told of his rich of his Goodness, Rom. 2. 4. And
that he is rich in Mercy, Ephes. 2. 4. Of his ex-
ceeding riches of his Grace, v. 7. And that he gives
us richly all things to enjoy, 1 Tim. 6. 17. He may
therefore give us seasonable Correction and Cha-
stisement;

stifement; but he will also give us sufficient Maintenance, and a bountiful Reward. The whole VVorld is at his Command; and by his Power he can do what he will for us, by his Wisdom he knows what's fittest to be done for us, and by his Goodness he will do what is best for us.

This our great and good Master hath one only begotten Son, the well-beloved, whom he hath appointed Heir of all Things. Heb. 1. 2. To whom all Power is given in Heaven, and in Earth. Mat. 28. 18. Whom he hath set at his own right Hand in Heavenly Places, and hath put all Things under his Feet, and gave him to be the Head over all things to the Church. Eph. 1. 20. 22. This eternal SON of God, JESUS our LORD, that he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his Poverty might be rich. 2 Cor. 8. 9. He made himself of no Reputation, and took upon him the form of a Servant. Phil. 2. 7. And humbled himself to the death of the Cross for us. v. 8. That he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purifie unto himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works. Tit. 2. 14. We must confess this JESUS Christ to be the LORD, to the Glory of God the Father. Phil. 2. 11. We are to honour him, even as we honour the Father. Joh. 5. 23. And if we thus receive him as our LORD, and live in Obedience to him, we serve God acceptably, and continue in his Favour and Love, and thus much we are assured of by him whom he hath set over us; that we have his Friendship. Joh. 15. 14. Ye are my Friends (saith he) if ye do whatsoever I command you, I call you not Servants, but Friends. As many as receive him, to them giveth he power to become the Sons of God. Joh. 1. 12. And because we are Sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit

Spirit of his SON into our Hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore we are no more Servants, but Sons; and if Sons, then Heirs of God through Christ. Gal. 4. 7. Even to an Inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us. 1 Pet. 1. 4. In the mean time, we may be well assured, that continuing faithful to God in his Service, we can want nothing that is good for us. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not wish him also freely give us all Things? Rom. 8. 32. We know that all Things work together for good to them that love God. v. 28. And when our Service is at an end in this World, which will be very shortly, the same rich LORD whom we now serve, will thus welcome every one of us into the possession of the Inheritance reserved for us, saying, *Well done, good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy LORD.* Matt. 25. 21.

Verse 1.

And when our Service is
 good for us. He that feared not for us, but
 God in his Service, we can want nothing that is
 may be well assured that continuing faithful to
 Heaven for us. I Per. 1. 1. In the mean time, we
 unquenchable, and that which is not weary, referred to
 Col. 3. 23. Every to his Inheritance incorruptible, and
 Lord, and if thou, then think of God through Christ
 that Heavens are are no more Stewards, but
 Spirit of his Son into our Hearts, saying, Abba, Fa-

Verse 1.

Which had a Steward.

By the *Rich Man*, who is here said to have had
 a *Steward*, our blessed *Saviour* calls to our re-
 membrance, the great and rich *LORD* of all the
 World, whose we all are, and whom we are all
 bound to serve. And now by the *Steward* which
 this *Rich Man* had, he would mind us of our own
 relation to the same rich *LORD*. Every one of
 us, every Man and Woman in the World, is the
Steward of God. Some part, more or less, of
 his *Goods* he hath committed to our charge, and
 expects we should be faithful in our Trust, and
 make a right Use, and a good Improve-
 ment of every Thing, observing Religious-
 ly all the Rules and Orders that he hath
 given us.

This is our present condition in this World,
 in this relation we all stand to God, we are all
 of us God's *Stewards*, and so we are to account
 our selves, and to behave our Selves towards
 God, and towards one another, as *Stewards* in-
 trusted by God with the management of some
 part of his *Goods*. Here then two things are to
 be considered by us.

1. That

himself his. We are his own, and whatever he giveth us is no less his for being ours, because we our selves are his still. God giveth much to us, but he can give nothing from himself. He cannot cease to be God, i. e. the absolute LORD and Sovereign Disposer and Commander of all things.

4. **Whatsoever he hath given us, is ours only so far, for such Ends and Uses, and on such Terms, and with such Reserves and Limitations, as he pleaseth.** And we are to use all according to his Directions, and therefore hath he given us certain Laws and Rules, whereby we are to order our selves, and every thing that he hath committed to our Management, and God in all things is to be glorified. 1 Pet. 4. 11.

5. **We are not therefore unaccountable for any thing that we have; but God hath assur'd us, That he takes Notice of our whole behaviour, and will call us to an Account, and Punish or Reward us accordingly as we now behave our selves in our Office and Trust.**

From all this it is very plain, that whatever we are, or have, we are no more but God's **Stewards**.

II. We are next to consider, what it is to be so. That as we have seen this to be our condition in the World, and Relation to God; so we may understand our Duty and Business too whilst we live in the World.

A **Steward** then, such as is here meant, is a **Servant** unto whose care and management his Master

ster hath committed any part of his Family or E-
 state. He is set over, and hath the ordering of
 some Portion, more or less, of his Lords Goods,
 which he is to manage according to his Master's
 Will and Pleasure, and to give up an account of
 all unto him, whensoever he pleaseth to call for
 it. A *Steward* then, how much a Gentleman so-
 ever he be, is but another's *Servant*. How rich so-
 ever he seems to be in Wealth, he is not the ow-
 ner of it, but that other whose *Servant* he is.
 How great a Command soever he hath over o-
 thers, yet is it no greater than by his Master's Au-
 thority is given him. His Office is during the
 pleasure of his Lord, and no longer. He can
 use no part of the *Goods* which he hath in his
 Hand, but only so far as his Master giveth him
 Leave. He is arbitrary in nothing, but as much
 under the Command of his Master, how much
 soever he may be advanced above others, as the
 poorest Creature that belongs unto him. And
 to make one a good *Steward*, these three Quali-
 fications are necessary. *First*, That he be a Man
 of good *Understanding* in his Business which he
 undertakes, that he have *Wisdom* enough for his
 Office, and know how to manage all the Con-
 cerns of his *Master* to good advantage. He ought
 to be a Person of some knowledge and discretion.
Secondly, That he be diligent and careful, that
 he watch over his Master's Affairs, and have
 his Eyes upon every thing intrusted to him, and
 keeping very exact accounts by him. He must be
 no negligent, careless or slothful Person. And
Thirdly, That he be honest, just and faithful in
 his Trust, doing no wrong to any one with
 whom he hath to do, nor deceiving his Master,
 but doing his Will in every Thing, and consul-
 ting

ting his Honour and Interest in his whole Conduct. This is all that I think now needful to be said for our Information. What it is to be a Steward, such as we all are to God.

Let us now see, what Inferences are hence to be made, in order to our well governing of our selves, as we are God's Stewards.

St. Paul tells us, That it is required in Stewards, that a Man be found faithful. 1. Cor. 4. 2. Who then is that faithful and wise Servant (as our Saviour speaks, Luk. 12. 42.) who is worthy to be accounted a good Steward of God's Goods? Who is he, that is so faithful to God, so wise for himself, as to Husband all things at once to his Master's Honour, and his own Advantage? Such Men I hope there are yet amongst us; but not every where to be found. From what hath been said, these Things do necessarily follow.

1. Nothing that we have is simply, and absolutely our own; but all is his, whose Stewards we are. It is as false, as impious an Opinion, that too many seem to have, who have no saying more commonly in their Mouths than this: *What I have is mine own, and I may do what I will with my own.* When indeed, all that we have is God's, and we are to do with it what he will, and not what we will our selves. We are like good Stewards, in every Thing to go about to consult the Will of God our Master, and to dispose of whatever we have, according to the Directions which he hath given us in his Word; and to lay aside all regard to our own Wills and Lusts.

2. Not

Not one amongst us all, how great and Lordly soever he would appear in the World, is his own Master, or simply so his own Command, or Disposal. He is but God's Steward, and absolutely in his power, and bound to observe all his Commands, as much as the meanest Begger in the World; and may whenever it pleaseth God, be reduced to his needy, low, and despised Estate, without doing him any wrong at all.

3. Thence doth it also follow, that no one, whatever pre-eminence he hath attain'd unto, hath any Arbitrary or Absolute Sovereignty, or Command over others, nor can expect any more than a limited Obedience to his Will. He is, whatever else he be, God's Steward, and his Master's Will is his Law, and binds him to Duty as much as any other, and all others, so far, as that they owe the Servant, howsoever dignified, no Obedience contrary to his Master's Will. And hence all that are in any kind of Authority over others may learn their Duty, and what becomes them in every of their Stations as God's Stewards; which is principally to regard the Honour of God their great Master, in the upholding of Religion, and seeing his Laws of Piety, Honesty and Sobriety, so far as in them lieth, put in Execution, and universally obey'd by all over whom they have any Command. If they do not this, they are unfaithful Stewards, preferring their own Wills and Lusts before their Master's Honour and Right.

4. If we be all God's Stewards, we ought every one to be contented with his Condition, and

to rest satisfied in his present station, whatever it be. The Family we live in is God's, it is he that maintains us in it, and he is Lord of his Family, and placeth or displaceth therein according to his own Wisdom. Whatever our Office, Station or Allowance be, it is not what we had any antecedent Right to, but what he hath of his undeserv'd goodness freely assign'd us. Howsoever therefore he disposeth of us, we are to be content, and cheerfully to do the Business which he hath set us to do.

5. As we are the *Stewards* of God, we are bound to behave our selves as becomes us towards the whole Family wherein we live. *First*, We are not to envy any one therein for his higher place, or greater allowance. Whatsoever he is, he is God's Steward too of so much as God hath thought fit to intrust him with, and he hath no more than his Master thinks fit to give him, and we have in the mean time all that God sees it fit for us to have. God is the best Judge, and a just Disposer of his own, and it becomes not us to have an evil envious Eye at any one, because he is good to him. *Secondly*, We are not to wrong any one of God's great Family, the *VV*orld, of any part of his Goods, for in that we contradict the *VV*ill of our Master, and wrong him. Whatever Portion of his Goods God hath committed to another's Trust, they are God's Goods still, and he hath placed them as he saw fit, and we wrong him in displacing and removing them to our selves, or making use of them without his Authority. *Thirdly*, We ought to live in due Subjection and Obedience to every one in his Office and Stewardship whereinto God hath put

put him, and to do his Commands cheerfully in all Things wherein God hath given him the Command over us. *Lastly*, We are to despise no one, whatever he be, for his poverty, or low Estate, and mean or vile condition in the World; for he is a Member of the same great Family, and serves the same great Master, and is entertain'd by him, and is his Steward too of so much as it pleaseth him, and lives as we do of his Allowance, and may (for ought we know) be dearer to him, and more in his favour than we are; and tho' he judge him not so fit for the higher Office and Employment which he hath put us into at present, yet may his Fidelity and diligence in a lower be more acceptable, and in the end better rewarded.

6. Hence have we much cause to comfort our selves, so long as we behave our selves as we ought in our Stewardship, notwithstanding any ill Opinion Men may have of us, how much soever they may scorn, or abuse us. For what need we trouble our selves with what Men think or say of us, so long as we stand in this honourable relation to God, and can assure our selves that he is well pleas'd with our carriage in our *Stewardship*? Him it concerns us to please, by whose Bounty we live, and who can when he will displace us. We are not to account to Men, but God. If others will be displeas'd at us for pleasing our Master, we cannot help it, nor need we be much concern'd at it. So long as they can neither laugh nor frown us out of our Duty, they cannot out of his favour, and therefore not out of our Reward. Yea, tho' God, to try our constancy and patience, shall suffer them to deprive

us of any of those Goods whereof he hath made us *Stewards*, they are his still whilst in their Hands, and he can when he will restore them to us, or give us a better *Stewardship*, or put us into Possession of our eternal inheritance.

Verse I.

--- And the same was Accused unto him, that he had wasted his Goods.

WE are all (as hath been said) God's *Stewards*, and have every one of us some Portion of his Goods committed to our Care and wise Management. God, I say, is the *Rich Master*, and every one of us the *Steward*. We are now to consider three things more, viz. What are his Goods, when they are *wasted*, and what the *Steward's* being *Accus'd* unto his Master for wasting them, signifies,

First, What are the Master's Goods, which the Steward wasted? Now, in general (as was said before) these Goods are the things (of what sort soever they be) that God bestoweth upon any of us. When God first made Man, he did very nobly enrich him. God created Man in his own Image.

Image. Gen. 1. 27. And enriched him with those excellent faculties of Soul, which well fitted him to be the Lord of the lower World under him. And so he made him. v. 28. *Have Dominion* (saith he to Man) *over the Fish of the Sea, and over the Fowl of the Air, and over every Living thing that moveth upon the Earth. He put all things under his Feet.* Psal. 8. *And the Earth hath he given to the Children of Men.* Psal. 115. 16. These Goods are in particular either such as are common to Mankind, or such as are appropriated to certain Ranks, Orders and Relations among Men. The common Goods are either such as are usually called the Goods of Fortune, or Worldly Goods, as Lands, Houses, Cattle, Gold and Silver, and whatever serves for our bodily Life, Health and Refreshment, for Food and Raiment. All which are without us, and call'd therefore outward good things. Other Goods which God hath given us, we have within our selves, some in our Bodies call'd bodily good things, as Health and Strength, and Beauty, our Limbs, and the Instruments of Sense as well as Action; and some belonging to the Soul, as Understanding, Wit, Memory, Will and Conscience, all which are natural to the Soul of Man; besides which, there be supernatural Gifts of the Holy Ghost, which he distributeth among Men as he will; which I reckon not among common Goods, because they are common to all, for they are not so; but because Mankind is capable of them generally, and they are not appropriated to any particular Order or Rank of Men. There are also other accidental circumstantial or accessorial good things which God giveth unto Men, as Time, Opportunities and Occasions. Credit

and Reputation, Friends, Helps and Advantages, and many sorts of Encouragements, and in short, whatever may in any kind be comfortable or useful to us in this Life, or Instrumental to a better, and eternal, especially the light of the Gospel, and the helps of the Ministry, Churches, and Means of upholding the worship of God, with good Education, Schools of Learning, and the like. All of us, indeed, are not partakers of all these good things, or in the same measure; but every one hath some of them, and of so much as he hath, is God's Steward.

Now there be also other Goods of God, which are committed to the charge of some Orders and Ranks among Men. Thus Kings, and Governors, and all Subordinate Magistrates, and Officers in the Kingdom or Commonwealth, have the People of whole Nations, or less and narrower Provinces and Precincts committed unto their Care, to make good Laws, and see them duly executed for the maintenance of Piety, Justice and Sobriety; Peace and Quietness. They are God's Ministers. *Rom. 13.* Bishops and Pastors are God's Ministers in his Church, and Stewards of the mysteries of God. *1 Cor. 4. 1.* These have the care of the Flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made them Overseers. *Act. 20. 28.* All Parents, and Masters, and Mistresses of Families, have their respective charges of Children and Servants committed to their Care and Government. And this is enough to shew us what are our Master's Goods.

Secondly, When are these Goods wasted? We must know, That God hath not (as too many vain Persons in the World love to do) filled his great

great House of the Universe with useless and superfluous Goods. *All that he made was very Good.* Gen. 1. ult. that is, very useful in its kind, and fit for the use which God design'd it for. The infinitely wise God made nothing useless, altho it may be we, such is our blindness, understand not the use of all things; yet it becomes us to say with the Psalmist, Psal. 104. 24. *O Lord, how manifold are thy works? In Wisdom hast thou made them all.* Neither doth God delight to have a houseful of vain Servants, for Shew more than for Service, and who have nothing to do, but to consume what he hath provided, and rather make their Master minister to their Lusts, than employ themselves in any business, whereby they may serve him. He hath appointed every one of us our work, and committed something to our Charge, which he expects we should take care of. This, if we do not, we are unfaithful Stewards, and are said to waste his Goods. And thus we may do more ways than one.

1. By misusing, or abusing, any part of his Goods. If we make a wrong use of them, such as he alloweth not, we abuse them. If in the use of them, we follow not his Directions, and the Orders which he hath given us, we misuse them. We cannot be ignorant, unless we be careless, and mind not what's said unto us, what these Directions are. They are some of them written in the very nature of the Things themselves, and all of them in his holy word. We are there taught how to use every Thing to God's honour and glory, and to the good both of our Neighbours, or Fellow Servants, and of our selves. If then we consult not God's honour in every Thing,

Thing, if we do not in the first place serve him with his own, nor by bringing him in any real advantage or profit, that's impossible, but by doing his Will and Pleasure with every Thing, which is to give him his due honour, we abuse, and waste his Goods. The Rule is plain. *Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* 1 Cor. 10. 31. When therefore we make the Goods of God Instruments of Sin against God, we most abominably abuse and waste them. We have again another Rule as plain as the former. Gal. 6. 10. *As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all Men.* When therefore we do hurt to any one with the Goods God hath given us, we abuse them. We have also a third Rule, which Nature it self, tho' we had it not expressly set down in God's Word, will sufficiently teach us. Phil. 2. 12. *Work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling.* When therefore we hurt our selves, or obstruct our own happiness with any of God's Goods, we abuse them. In short then, when we serve the Devil with any thing we have, doing his Will; when we gratifie the vain Humours of foolish Men with them, doing their Will; when we feed and pamper our Lusts with them, doing the will of the Flesh; when we grow proud of them, and give not God all the honour of them, as the Author of all; or when we idolize them, setting them up in our Hearts in God's stead, and giving them our Love, we waste them in abusing them.

2. We waste them by not using them, and neglecting to improve them to the ends for which God bestow'd them upon us. We must not only take heed that we do no hurt with a-

ny thing, but we must also take care to do good with every thing. Every thing is given to profit with. It is not enough, that the Fig tree brings forth no bad, or poisonous Fruit; it must also bring forth good Fruit, such as is useful to the World, and it was made to bear; or else it is to be cut down as a Thing good for nothing, and cumbersome to the Ground. *Luk. 13. 7.* Every thing which God gave us, is a Talent to be improved, as in the Parable, *Luk. 25.* God delivering to us any portion of his Goods, v. 14. expects we should husband the same to the best advantage, and gain what we can by Trading with them; and he that doth not so, wasts his Talent. It was not enough that the *slothful Servant* had his Talent laid up carefully, but because he had done no good with it, his Master called him *wicked* as well as *slothful*, v. 26. and commanded him to be cast into outer darkness, because he was an *unprofitable Servant*, v. 30. He then that doth no good with his Master's Goods, is accounted a waster of them.

3. We waste our Lord's Goods, when through negligence and carelessness, we suffer them to be lost, or broken, or so spoil'd and marred, that they become useless and unserviceable. When we are not watchful over every thing we are trusted withal, nor take that care which we ought to keep and preserve every thing in such good order, that it may be ready on all occasions, and fit for present use, this is one kind of wasting of our Master's Goods, as may be shew'd more fully hereafter. This, at present, may suffice to make us understand how the Steward may waste his Lord's Goods.

Before we proceed to the *third* thing to be enquired into, I mean the *Accusation* of the wastful Steward to his Master, it will be fit that we make some Reflection on our present Carriage and Behaviour towards God, and the use that we generally make of *his Goods*. Let us but impartially examine every one himself, let every one set himself at the Bar of Conscience, and answer faithfully to the charge which there may be brought against him, and every one must confess himself guilty in many things, whereof we are apt to take too little notice. Ever since the Devil taught our first Parents the art of wasting, Mankind hath been a very wastful thing, and we our selves will, at this day, it may be fear'd, be found to be as wastful a Generation as any that went before us. Tho' our first Parents having wasted so much, hath left us all in comparison of them very poor, and in all reason should make us more thrifty, and better Husbonds of that little which they have left us, yet go we on still very confidently in their wastful way; and our Poverty it self will not teach us good Husbandry, but we generally live, as tho' we were to live by wasting.

In the *first* place; how do we waste those Outward Worldly Goods, which in any measure God hath given us? What good use do most of us make of them? Nay, what ill use do we not make of them, to the dishonour of God, the wronging of our Neighbours, and the hurting of our Selves? Do we indeed, as we are commanded, *honour the LORD with our Substance, and with the first Fruits of our increase?* Prov. 3. 9. *And as we have opportunity, do good especially to the Household of Faith?* Gal. 6. 10. How freely and liberally

berally are we wont to *communicate unto him that teacheth in every good Thing?* Gal. 6. 6. Do we not indeed serve the Devil a great deal more than God with these Goods? Are we not much more free of them in upholding the Service of the Devil, than the Service of God? Do not we make them the Instruments of Sin, and of those *Works of the Devil, which the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy?* 1 Joh. 3. 6. This we certainly do, whilst with our Wealth we minister to the Pride and Luxury either of our selves, or others, which is a thing very common amongst us. Do we not very ordinarily gratifie the extravagant Humours of vain Men with our Wealth, and whilst we most sinfully comply with their Lusts in Feasting, Drinking, and all Excess of Riot, endeavour to christen our Waste by the name of Hospitality? Are we not daily feeding our Lusts with our Goods, and contrary to the command, *Rom. 13. ult.* making Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof? How many of us glory in our Riches? Are we not proud of our selves, accounting our selves so much better than our poor Neighbours, as we are richer than they, tho' indeed we be so much the worse than they, taking the advantages which our Wealth gives us to oppress, crush, and ruin them? How many again idolize their Riches, loving, and trusting to nothing so much, nor fearing so much to offend God by breaking his Commandments, as they do to lose, or diminish their Riches? Thus many of us waste them in the very worst way of wasting them, making them the means and helps to us of doing most wickedly. How many more of us abuse them another way, that is, in doing none, or very little good with them? We are

Mem-

Members of the Kingdom wherein we live, and are to regard the common good of our Country more than our own private Interest. But where are they that do so? 'Tis well that we have a common Interest in the whole Body, so that we can have little assurance, that we can quietly enjoy our own Estates, if the Nation wherein we live continue not in Peace. It is for our own sakes that the Kingdom, and sometimes the Church and Religion are the better, and are taken care of, so far at least, as our own Estates are concern'd in their safety. But in other Cases, where we can enjoy our wealth to our selves, without taking care of the Publick; we shew it plainly, that we little regard the latter in comparison of the former. When we pay Tribute and Custom, to whom we know that by the special Command of our great Master they are due, do we it freely and cheerfully, or any farther than we are constrain'd to it? Contribute we according to our Abilities, towards the upholding of the Government, and securing of the Peace and Tranquility of our Country? Or shuffe we not all we can, and use all Arts to lay the Load on other Men's Shoulders? How forward are we in Acts of Justice, in punctually paying all our Debts, and making Satisfaction for Injuries? The Estates of Lawyers are a good witness against us, who by being a Law to our selves, as reason commands us in these things, might bring them to a competence both of Estate and Honesty. How we dispose of our Master's Goods in Acts of Charity, the abundance of poor and needy People unprovided for, witnesseth to our shame. And whilst these, and many more necessary Duties of the Stewards of God are neglected by us,

How

How many slothful Servants, or busy only in their own Business, and not their Master's, are burying all in the Earth, or in the Chest, it matters not which, no Body knows for whom, or for what? How many, lastly, who have but a small Portion, yet enough with good Husbandry, or in an industrious Hand, make no improvement of it as they might and ought to do; but through Idleness and Sloth, Negligence and Improvidence; Profuseness and expensive ways above their Ability, reduce themselves and Families to Beggery? Thus waste we (as is too apparent to all the World) this sort of Goods whereof we are Stewards.

In the next place, let us see if we be more faithful to God, or wise for our selves, in the well management of the Goods which we have within our selves. What good use do we generally make of our bodily health, and strength? Do we indeed bestow them on God, our Neighbours, and our selves, as we ought to do? The more healthful, and able we are, do we take so much more pains in the worshipping of God, and labouring to gain him Servants; in going about, as our blessed Saviour did, doing good; in the Service of our King, and our Country, in preserving the Life and Goods of our Neighbours when there is need of our help; in labouring for our selves and our Families, and all to have that we may give to him that needeth? Or are we not the prouder for them, and glory over others in them, and encourage our selves by them to do more wickedly? Do not we trust so much to our health and strength, that we forget our preparations for Sicknes and Death, and venture more boldly on such Sins as naturally tend to the impairing

pairing of them, encouraging our selves in all Excess and Debauchery by the strength of our Constitution, till weakness become insensibly upon us, and we drop down suddenly through Death into Hell? Is our bodily beauty and comeliness a remembrancer to us of God's Wisdom and Goodness, and take we Occasion thereby of praising God, and to have a pure and beautiful Soul in that handsome Case? Or do we not make our Beauty a Motive to Pride and Wantonness in our selves, and a Share and Bate for Lust in others? Are we not tempted by it to despise and scorn others, and to grow insolent and impudent in our Behaviour? Have we not Eyes and Ears for Vanity and Filthiness, and none for the contemplation of God's wonderful Works, nor for the reading and hearing of his VVord? Have we not Tongues for idle and vain Talk, foolish Jestings and Scurrility, Obscenity and Profaneness, Slandering, Lying, Reviling, Jeering, Swearing and Cursing, Telling Tales, and Sowing Dissension, and the like Services of the deviling, humouring, and corrupting more the wicked and profane; and no Words wherein to sing forth the Praise of God, to instruct our Company in Piety and Vertue, to encourage Goodness, and plead for God and Religion? Have we not Understanding sufficient to be listed in the number of those who are wise to do evil, but to do good have no Understanding? Have we not contrivance enough for the World, and to bring about our own carnal Ends, to project for our Lusts, to plot Mischief, and carry on our Treacherous Designs of entrapping and over-reaching our honest Neighbours, and manage our Trades cunningly for our Interest; yea, to invent Subtle Arguments

against

against Religion and Vertue, and to bring Vice and Profaneness into Repute and Credit? Can we not store our selves with a thousand Excuses for any Wickedness, and Shifts to shuffle off Duty? Cannot we remember Trifles and ridiculous Toys, Lies, and ill Reports made of others, yea, and every petty Injury that is done us, so as to study Revenge, and never to forgive? Have we not a great deal of Wit to spend upon any good Person, or thing that we have a mind to abuse and expose to the laughter and contempt of Men? And yet how little of any of these have we to serve God, and our Neighbours with? We have neither Understanding, nor Memory, nor Wit, nor Learning, nor any thing else to vindicate the glory of God, nor the honour of Religion, nor the good of Mankind. Nay, how many of us lose the use of all those noble Faculties of Soul by not using nor improving of them, through Sloth and Negligence, for want of Learning when we may, and studying, meditating and exercising them. Yea, how many by intemperance of all kinds quite besot themselves, and by degrees become very Children and Fools? What unhappy Pains and Troubles do many of us undergo, to weaken and destroy all the good Parts which God hath given us, even to the deforming first, and then killing our Bodies, and to the besotting, and then damning of our Souls? And is it not too easy a thing to observe all this waste of our inward Goods amongst us at this day?

In the third place, when we consider how most of us use our time, and opportunities, and our many helps and advantages which at any time we have to do good in our Generations, we cannot

not but wonder and stand amaz'd at our selves, seeing what a prodigious folly and negligence we are guilty of. We all know that we have but a time in this World, and that eternal concerns depend upon the use and improvement of this time, and we know not how quickly it will be at an end. And yet, how strangely prodigal are we of it, even as if we had no business of moment to do in it. How little do we bestow of it on that for which it is principally given us, that is, to fit our selves for a blessed Eternity? How much more of it than is needful do we bestow on things which necessarily call for a very great share of it, that is, about the Provision for Back and Belly, in Sleep and Rest, and in Recreation? These will have, and are allow'd a very considerable part of our time, and the Affairs of the World, wherein we must be employ'd for the Publick good, take up almost all the rest. But how much of it do we usually steal from such useful business, to waste in idleness and vanity? Our Lusts have got the greatest share of all immoderate Sleep, and lazy loiterings, our Curiosity, Pride and Wantonness; our gaming, playing, impertinent Visits, and vain Godshipings, our Riotings, Revelings and Debaucheries, have almost ingrossed the whole of it to themselves: Laudable and necessary Businesses have as little of it as we can, and God and our Souls, have even none at all. By this means all our Opportunities and Advantages are lost, and the happy hour is let slip, which had it been laid hold on, might have been worth an Age to us. Having thus briefly mention'd our waste of time, we will now add but one thing more among the Goods we are now speaking of, and that is, the

inestimable

inestimable Treasure of Grace and Love in the
 Gospel of JESUS Christ, in whom are hid all the
 Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge. Col. 2:3
 Every one of us that enjoys this rich Treasure
 must make sure to keep and improve it, and shall
 be call'd to a very severe account for any waste
 he shall make. But alas, notwithstanding this,
 how carelessly do we generally behave our selves?
 How little do we prize this Jewel of so great
 price, that it cost the Son of God his most preci-
 ous Blood to purchase it for us? We can silent-
 ly hear it reproach'd and vilified, we can calmly
 see it trampled under foot by Dogs and Swine.
 We will hardly be at the trouble to take notice
 of it. The light shines upon us, and we shut
 our Eyes against it. God's Messengers bring it
 home to our Doors, and we despise them and it
 both. They beg of us in Christ's stead, as tho'
 God did beseech us by them, that we would be
 reconciled unto God, and accept of this token
 of his Love; but we turn to them the deaf
 Ear, and will not be entreated to embrace his
 mercy. How many of us who make a shew of
 receiving it, and profess our selves thankful for
 it, and have solemnly vow'd to keep it very
 choicely, and to value it above our Lives, and to be
 everlastingly obliged to God for it, and by it; yet
 regard it not, nor ever endeavour to live wor-
 thy of it? Nay, how many who seem earnest-
 ly to contend for it, yet behave themselves so, as
 if they valued it for nothing else, but that it find
 them with matter of dispute and wrangling?
 That which was intended for a bond of Union,
 they turn into bond of Contention and Division,
 and fall out bitterly with those whom it Teacheth
 them to love. Thus is the Jewel hammer'd to
 pieces

pieces by us ; and every Party going away with a piece, triumphs as if he had won the whole ; and the Gospel of Peace is quite lost among us, and whoever finds any other but that, has found a new nothing, how fond soever he is of it. Such waste do we make of the Gospel of our blessed JESUS.

Let us now in the last place see, what waste is made by us of those other Goods of our Lord, which are proper to some Orders and Relations Men. I speak not here to Magistrates, and it becomes us not to say much of their failings, where we have not Audience of their Persons. But we are Subjects, and are to consider how we Husband the benefit of Government. And here we have reason, I am sure, to accuse our selves as wasters of a very great blessing of God ; for such is Government, without which (so much have we lost the very nature of Men, which obligeth us to a peaceable and friendly Communion and Society one with another) we should be all in a Confusion and constant War, and live in fear one of another, as tho' we were wild Beasts, and not Men. But, alas, how unthankful are we for this benefit, and how unwilling to accept of it ? We have too little Religion to submit to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's sake, as we are Commanded. 1 Pet. 2. or to be subject to the higher Powers which are of God, for Conscience sake. Rom. 13. We cannot endure to be restrain'd by good Laws from fulfilling our Lusts, or to be tied up to that piece of slavery (as many of us account it) of *living quiet and peaceable Lives in all Godliness and Honesty.* 1 Tim. ---- To take no notice of open Rebels, or secret Plotters against the Government, which

which are numerous enough. How do the generality of us slight the Authority of Laws, and take all the care we can that they be never put in Execution? The Officers to see that done are frown'd upon if they go about, and so good Christians are they, that they have neither Courage nor Conscience enough to do their Duties, if their Neighbours will be angry with 'em for it. The Oaths themselves have taken faithfully to do their Office they quite forget, if they hear a Gentleman swear that they are Fools if they keep them. A thousand tricks we have to frustrate the gracious design of God, in setting his Ministers over us for our good. Rom. 1. 3— and to lose the benefit of it. And, oh! what a load of guilt have both we who are set to minister in the Church, *as Stewards of the mysteries of Christ.* 1 Cor. 4. 1. And they to whom we minister, for their slighting the Office and Benefit of our Ministry. We, of all Men, who are Ambassadors for Christ, and workers together with him, have cause to blush and tremble, when we consider how little we heed what St. Paul hath told us, *That a Bishop must be blameless as the Steward of Christ.* Tit. — O! how little watch we for Men's Souls as they that must give an Account? Heb. — How negligent are we in all the parts of our Office? How many of us preach our selves more than the Lord JESUS Christ, and make through vain Glory and a desire to be admired, the mysteries whereof we are Stewards, rather more mysterious than plainer to our hearers, and seek with much more earnestness theirs than them? How many of us strive rather to Lord it over God's Heritage, than to make our selves Servants of all, as we ought to do,

to win the more unto our great Master? How many, instead of being ensamples to the Flock, becomes Seducers and Tempters, lead the Sheep of Christ into Error, and into Sin? What can we on these Accounts expect, but that whilst we teach others, and teach not our selves, we should at last be found cast-aways. The unsavory Salt is good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of Men. But, alas, how many of the People, instead of endeavouring to have such Salt cast out, account it more savory than any other, and love no other Ministers but such as cease to be the Servants of Christ, that they may please Men? We seek not in a Pastor a good Instructor, or a good Guide, but a good Companion, and one whose witty discourse may serve not as Salt, to preserve our Minds from Corruption, but rather as Salt Meats to help us to relish our Liquor. If any thing displease us, it is the Ministry, not the Minister; the good Minister is indeed hated for his Ministry's sake, and the evil one is made much of, because he is a scandal to his Function, and gives us a handle to shake it by. The most think, that of all other Men the Minister may be best spared for any good he doth them; for they cannot think their Souls worth the saving at the charge of his maintenance. And now, what can we hope to meet with in most Families, when People shew themselves so little concern'd for the Publick Service of God? They that discover so much Profaneness Abroad, are not like to be found very Religious within Doors, and in private. How do Husbands and Wives, Parents and Children, Masters and Servants, there behave themselves in their several Stewardships? Families are the Nurseries of Church and State,
and

and the Plants grow there, which are to be the Strength and Beauty of both. What care is there taken to fit them for either. I will not come to particulars. It is enough to observe, how little of Religion is to be seen in most Families, how seldom God is there worshiped, and how rarely the Members of the Family are Instructed out of his word; and what untoward Examples they have always before their Eyes in their Parents or Masters? There is hardly any thing to be seen in our private Houses, but either drudgery or vanity, the World and our Lusts make us all the business we have there to do. God is usually a very Stranger to us, and we never have any Entertainment for him, nor can we find in our hearts to invite him to abide with us. Whatever Education or Breeding we bestow on our Children, we take too little care to bring them in the nourture and admonition of the Lord, as is our Christian Duty. Eph.--- And whatever care we take of our Servants, we are not very careful to see that they serve God. These things are all too notorious to be denied, and hence we may, in some measure, learn how great wasters we all are of our Master's Goods.

And how greatly should this humble us in our own Eyes, and in the Presence of that gracious Master, towards whom we behave our selves so unfaithfully. What corrupt things are we, who are so strongly inclin'd to abuse the goodness of God, and to turn his Grace into wantonness? What unprofitable Servants are the very best of us, and how little can we deserve the Love and Favour of our Master, or challenge any other Reward as our due, but that of unjust and wasteful Servants? And how should this make us not

only well contented with, but very thankful for the very lowest place in God's Family? Any thing, be it ever so little, must needs be too good for the very best of us, and whilst we are suffer'd to live and eat, tho' it be in the lowest rank, and of the courtest fare, we ought to esteem it a very great mercy to such as we are, who have made so much waste of his Goods by whom we are fed. Whilst we are not cast into Hell, nor finally condemn'd to suffer the just Punishment which our unfaithfulness hath merited, we have very great cause to be thankful. But then let us remember what we have to do. Let us amend our faults, and become more faithful for the time to come, otherwise by our hardness and impenitent hearts, we do but Treasure up for our selves wrath against the day of wrath. Let us hearken to the good directions which are given us. 1 Pet. 4. 10. *As every Man hath receiv'd the Gift, even so Minister the same one to another, as good Stewards of the manifold Grace of God. If any Man speak, let him speak as the Oracle of God; if any Man Minister, let him do it of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through JESUS Christ; to whom be Praise and Dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

Thirdly, We are now in the last place to see, what the Accusation of this Unjust Steward to his Master signifieth. And the same, that is, the Steward was accused unto him, that is, his Master, that he had wasted his Goods. Now we have said, That we are all of us the Stewards of God; and that we are all great wasters of our Lord's Goods of all sorts: We therefore are they, who are accused unto God our Master: That which

we would learn is, what this *Accusation* meaneth. Whoever are our Accusers, or after what manner soever it is that they Accuse us, certain it is, That God needs not to be told or inform'd of what we do in this lower World, no body needs go hence to carry him intelligence. He is every where present with us, *Whither shall we go from his Spirit? Or whither shall we flee from his Presence?* Psal. 139. 7. *Can any hide himself in secret Places, that I cannot see him, saith the LORD? Do not I fill Heaven and Earth? Saith the LORD.* Jer. 23, 24. *The Eyes of the LORD are in every place beholding the Evil and the Good.* Prov. 15, 3. *The ways of Man are before the Eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings.* Prov. 5. 21. *He understandeth our thoughts afar off.* Psal. 139. 2. What need then can there be of any ones accusing us to God? There is none, indeed, and therefore it is not necessary that by the unjust Steward's being Accused unto his Master, we should understand any more; but God's certain and clear Knowledge of our whole misbehaviour. In our several ways of wasting God's good Gifts, how closely or cunningly soever we carry the matter, all is manifest to God. We have abundance of shifts to hide our Faults from Men, but by no means can we possibly conceal them from God.

In our Courts of Judgment, there is no fair and legal Proceedings against Offenders, but a formal Accusation and Indictment, and the hearing of a sufficient number of Witnesses to prove the things which are laid to their charge. But before the great Judge of all the World, there is no need of any such formal process. No Master among Men can have his Eyes in every corner

to observe the carriage of every Servant that belongs unto him, but needs an informer in many things. It is not so with God. *All things are naked and open'd unto the Eyes of him with whom we have to do.* Heb. 4. 13. *His Eyes are upon the ways of Man, and he seeth all his goings.* Job 34. 21. God's Omniscience is to him instead of all information, Accusation, and Evidence or Testimony.

Our Sins then lying all open to the Eyes of our Righteous Judge, and he being himself an Eye-witness of all our miscarriages, there need no other Accusers than our Sins themselves; some whereof are of that hainous nature, that God thinks fit to let the World see, that he is highly offended by them, and therefore he punisheth them with some extraordinary judgment in this World. And these sins are said to cry unto God for Vengeance. As the shedding of *Abel's* blood cried unto God for a curse on *Cain* the wicked fratriicide. Gen. 4. 10. And the cry of *Sodom* and it's Neighbours is said by God to come up unto him, calling for Fire and Brimston to be rained down out of Heaven upon them. Gen. 18. 21. Thus is every Man's Sin his Accuser, and hath a Voice which God doth certainly hear. And the Sighs, and Tears, and Prayers of the Oppressed, and such as suffer by our sins are our Accusers. The cry of the poor *Israelites* in *Egypt* whilst they were in Bondage came up to God, Exod. 2. 23. *For the Oppression of the Poor, and for the sighing of the Needy, I will arise saith the LORD.* Psal. 12. 5. The Devil, as he accused righteous *Job* unjustly and maliciously, and is the Accuser of the Brethren, accusing them Day and Night, Rev. 12. 10. will without doubt be

as ready to accuse the Sinner, as he was busy with his Temptations to make him so. And lastly, every one of us will at last be found his own Accuser, his own Conscience, whatever shifts he now makes to silence, and lay it asleep, will at last awake, and be his Accuser to God, and instead of a thousand Witnesses to prove the Accusation.

O, how uncomfortable a thing, when well considered, is a wicked Life? What a Devil is that Man to himself, that lives in continual fear of himself, and dares not reflect with seriousness upon his own Actions, lest his own Soul should awake within him, and his Conscience begin to accuse him? In what a Condition is he, that is always offending, and always hath the Eye of his Judge upon him, and always carries a Spy, and an Accuser, and a Witness against him in his own Breast, which, tho' he may make a shift for a time to take notice of, will not be bribed to be silent for ever?

Why then will we be so foolish as to go on securely in an evil way? How dare we so confidently throw away our Master's Goods on our own Lusts, as tho' we were sure never to be accused unto him for it? How freely and merrily do we spend all we have of God's Gifts in such things as he is most dishonoured by, and which he hath expressly forbidden us upon pain of incurring his high displeasure, as tho' we acted all things with the greatest secrecy and safety in the World, no Eye seeing us. *Men encourage themselves in an evil Matter, they commune of laying Snares privily, they say who shall see them? Psal. 64.*

5. *The Adulterer saith, no Eye shall see me, and disguiseth his Face, Job 24. 15. He hath said in his Heart, God hath forgotten, he hideth his Face, he will never see it. Psal. 10. 11. The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Psal. 94. 7.* Hence is it that we waste our strength, our time, all our Parts, and all our Wealth, and every thing wherewith we might do much good to others, and our selves, either we think not that we are, or ever shall be accused for it; or we presume, that tho' we be accused, we shall be acquitted.

But as sure as we are all great Wasters, we shall also be accused for wasting. God sees and observes what Waste we make; and we have no way to escape the dismal Consequents of that Accusation, but by becoming better Husbands, and faithfuller Stewards before all be wasted. Let us therefore set God always before our Eyes, and let the Thoughts of his presence keep us in awe; for remember that being always in the presence of God, we are always under the Eye of our Master, and of our Judge, who will accept no Man's Person, but render to every one according to his Deeds. Remember also, that we can never flie from our selves, nor get quite rid of our own Consciences, and therefore let us reverence, and stand in awe of our selves, and take heed that our Consciences have nothing to say against us. Let us often examine and try them, that we may know what they have to say for, or against us. If we deal with them impartially, nor sparing to examine them thoroughly, we may be sure they will deal impartially with us,

us, and not be shy either in accusing or excusing, as there is cause. O, how comfortably goes that Man out of the World to give up his Accounts to God, whose Conscience cannot accuse him of any waste he hath made, which he hath not repented of, and obtain'd a Pardon for: Who shall lay any thing to his charge before the great Judge of Quick and Dead? *If our Hearts condemn us not, we have confidence towards God.* 1 Joh. 3. 11. And if we have sincerely repented, all the waste that we have formerly made, will be forgiven for his sake, who was made our Propitiation, is our Advocate, and shall be our Judge.

Verse 2.

Verse 2.

And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an Account of thy Stewardship; for thou mayst be no longer Steward.

THE unjust Steward having wasted his Master's Goods, was accused unto him for it. This we have heard, and what is signified by it. Here we are inform'd what course his Master took with him, how he would not let him go on always without check in his own way, making what waste he pleased of his Master's Goods. He takes an Opportunity to call him unto him, and talk with him about his Behaviour, and to make him sensible of his ill Carriage towards him. *How is it* (saith he) *that I hear this of thee?* How comes this to pass which I have heard of thy wasteful Courses. Consider it well, if either thou canst deny what I have heard to be true, or canst give any reason why thou should do so wickedly. How is it possible thou shouldst be so insensible either of the good condition thou hast been in with me in my Service, or of my concern
for

for the Goods I had entrusted thee withal? If thou hast any thing to say for thy self, if thou hast any colour or pretence for thy base ungrateful Behaviour, let me hear it. But I know thou canst plead nothing to any purpose in thine own Vindication, and therefore prepare thy self, *To give an account of thy Stewardship, for thou mayst be no longer Steward.* The time of thy Service is now expired, and I am resolved to keep thee no longer in thy place. Thou hast had time and Opportunity enough in my Service to enrich thy self sufficiently. If thou hadst been a good and provident Steward of my Goods thou hast done well for thy self, thou hast wanted nothing hitherto, nor shalt want any thing hereafter; but if it be true that I have heard of thee, that thou hast vainly wasted my Goods, shift for thy self as well as thou canst, for thou hast lost thy Opportunity, and my Favour. Bring in therefore thy Accounts, and let us see how things stand between us, and accordingly expect either Reward or Punishment. The loss of thy Stewardship will be no loss at all to thee, if thou hast been faithful; for I have provided a better place for thee. And if thou hast been unfaithful, and canst not bring in a good account, the loss of thy Stewardship is the least part of thy Punishment, I will make thee an Example to all unjust Stewards, and let them see in thee what they are like to get in the end by their unfaithful Dealings. Thus will God deal with every one of us, that goes on wasting his Goods, if we repent not, and make not our Accounts ready in good time.

In this Verse then we learn these four things for our Instruction,

I. That

1. That there will be an end of our Stewardship, when we must be no longer Stewards.

2. That God will call us to a Reckoning, and to give an Account of our Stewardship.

3. That it concerns us to consider well how we are able to answer God, saying, How is it that I hear this of you?

4. That God is not wanting to mind us of this Concern, but calls upon us to prepare our Accounts.

1. There will be an end of our Stewardship, *when we must be no longer Stewards.* We are to continue in our respective Offices, and have the Husbanding of the several Portions of Goods committed to us here, only for a time, and either for a longer or shorter term of Years or Days, as our great Master God Almighty pleaseth. *Our times are in God's Hand.* Psal. 31. 15. Our Stewardship is at longest for a Term of Life, and how long, or how short that will be, not one of us can tell. Neither how long before that short term end, some part of our Stewardship may be taken from us. Our Condition in this World is always uncertain to us, and changeable as it pleaseth God to make it. Sometimes we have more, and sometimes a less Portion of his Goods in our Hands; he giveth, and taketh away as he will, and it is fit he should do so, seeing he alone knoweth what in every moment of our Life is fittest for us. However our condition may change, and our charge thereby be less or greater, we are still
God's

God's Stewards for all we have so long as we live, and that will not be long. *For what is our Life? It is even a Vapour, which appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away.* Jam. 3. 14. *A very shadow which fleeth away, and continueth not.* Job 14. 2. Psal. 144. 4. *A time of sojourning at most,* 1 Pet. 1. 17. *Is there not an appointed time to Man upon Earth? Are not his Days also like the Days of an Hireling?* Job 7. 1. *He accomplisheth as an Hireling his Day.* Job 14. 6. This Day is a Day of Labour and Trouble, when we are every one to work, as our Place and Station requireth, it will have it's Night when no Man can work.

Let us then behave our selves diligently and wisely in our Stewardship while it lasts, and always remember, that it will shortly end. The reason why we are generally so negligent in our Office, is, because we presume too much of our long continuance in it, and of time enough yet behind to do what is yet undone. Whereas not one of us knows what shall be on the Morrow. *Jam. 3. 14.* Or what a Day may bring forth. Why then stand we here all the Day idle? Why are we not about our Master's Business, whilst we have time and strength to go about it? Both these will fail us ere we be aware of it. It is driven off by too many of us from Youth to Manhood, and from Manhood to Old Age, and in Old Age from Day to Day till Death surprize us. Thus, I say, we drive off our Work, but the Term of our Stewardship is every day nearer than other, how unready soever we are for it. And how near it is we know not. Only this we know, that the less of our Business is done, and the more negligent we have hitherto been; the more Work we have

have we made our selves, and for ought we know a great deal too much for the short time that is behind. Moreover, our LORD hath told us, that he will come as a Thief in the Night, that is, he will come suddenly when we least think of it to call us to give an account, and in what confusion shall we be when he comes to call for our Accounts, if we have them not then in readines?

If we behave our selves as we should do during the time of our Service, what difficulties or troubles soever we may meet with in it, this should encourage us to struggle through them all, that the time is but short, and then all our troubles will be at an end with it. And as soon as our Stewardship is at an end, we enter into the possession of a glorious Inheritance, the Reward is ready as soon as the Work is done. *In due time we shall reap if we faint not, and therefore let us not be weary of well-doing.* Gal. 6. 9. Behold (saith Christ), I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, to give to every Man according as his Work shall be. Rev. 22. 12.

II. God will call us to a Reckoning, and to give an Account of our Stewardship. There shall certainly be an Account called for. God, tho' he be a most liberal and bountiful, and in every respect a good and gracious Master, yet is no prodigal and regardless Disposer of his Goods. He gives them for good uses, and expects that good use should be made of them, and will call upon every one of his Servants to shew what good use he hath made of so much as he had the management of. Where he giveth Talents to Trade withal, he cometh at his own time to reckon with

with those Servants to whom he delivered them. Matt. 25. 19. *All shall give Account to him who is ready to judge the Quick, and the Dead.* 1 Pet. 4. 5. That is, *We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ.* 2 Cor. 5. 10. *Where we must give account even for every idle Word.* Mat. 12. 36. And every Man must account for his own Stewardship, whatsoever it hath been, and answer for his Abuse of every thing or Person that was committed to his care and charge. *Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.* Rom. 14. 2. This is a thing so plainly taught us in the holy Scripture, that no more needs to be said to convince us of it.

Let us therefore, as we desire to be acquitted when that Day of Account comes, shake off that gross supineness and security wherein most of us seem even to bury our selves alive, as tho' we were past all danger of ever being brought into question for what we do. *Because Sentence against an evil Work is not speedily executed; therefore the Heart of the Sons of Men is fully set in them to do evil.* Eccl. 8. 11. Because God in much patience a long time hath forbore us, we are too apt to flatter our selves with a vain hope that he will do so still. But the longer we are here spared, and the slower God is to punish us, and by taking vengeance on us to vindicate his abused patience, the heavier will his Wrath fall upon us in the great Day of Accounts. Tho' he therefore may suffer us to live long, and to thrive by our ill Behaviour as long as we live, yet are we assured of this, *That it is appointed for Men once to die, and after that the Judgment.* Heb. 9. 27. So that Judgment is as sure as Death, and this most Men think themselves too sure of.

And

And let the faithful Servants of God remember and comfort themselves in this. We are tempted sometimes to entertain hard thoughts of our righteous LORD, upon this account, that he seems too favourable to his wicked Servants, and permits them to live in a more plentiful and prosperous condition than they do who are most faithful to him. But let us have a care of suffering any ill Opinion of God's justice and goodness to possess us. *The LORD is not slack concerning his Promise, as some Men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance.* 2 Pet. 3. 9. No Man shall be able to complain, that God is too hasty with him, or that he gives him not time enough both to do all things that belong to his Stewardship, and to make ready his Accounts. But they who make not this good use of God's goodness towards them, do but heap up Wrath for themselves against the Day of Wrath, which is also the Day of the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God, Rom. 2. 5. when he will make it apparent to all the World, that he is righteous in all his Ways and Dealings with the Children of Men. *If therefore ye call on the Father, who without respect of Persons, judgeth according to every Man's Work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.* 1 Pet. 1. 17.

Let us give all diligence in the mean time to prepare, and make ready our Accounts against they be called for. Now is the time of casting them up, for look how they stand when we die, so must they be given in at the day of Judgment. The Account must be according to what we have received, and what we have done with all whilst here in the Body. There's no amend-
ment

ment or Correction of them allow'd us after Death; nothing to be added or subtracted. Now therefore let us repent, *that our Sins may be blotted out.* Act 3. 19.

III. It concerns us to consider how we are able to answer God, saying, How is it that I hear this of you? This is a Question, to which a satisfactory Answer is expected from every one of us. We must one day answer it, and upon that Answer depends our final Doom; and what comfort can we have so long as we have it not ready? The necessity therefore of such Consideration needs no proof, seeing what is once to be done, and is of so great moment, that our whole happiness depends upon the doing of it well, deserves (if any thing can deserve it) to be much thought on before hand.

Let every one therefore now set himself before himself, that is, at the Bar of his own Conscience, and judge himself, that he be not judged of the LORD. 1 Cor. 11. *For if our Heart condemn us, God is greater than our Heart, and knoweth all things.* 1 Joh. If we cannot make up now such Accounts, as our own Conscience will approve of, but find that it chargeth us with much that we cannot account for, how can we hope that such an Account will pass in the Court of Heaven before God's Omniscience. Tho' we knew nothing by our selves, yet were we not thereby justified, *but he that judgeth us is the LORD.* 1 Cor. 4. Let us therefore enquire how we can answer him. *He heareth this of us, that we waste his Goods.* He can be ignorant of nothing

thing, our daily Miscarriages are all manifest unto him, even as were the Sins of Sodom, *The Shew of our Countenance doth witness against us, and we declare our Sin as Sodom, and hide it not, as was said of the People of Israel. Isa. 1. 3. 9.* The cry of the very same wasting Sins, which call'd down Vengeance on the Sodomites, is gone up unto God against us, for *this was the Iniquity of Sodom's Pride, fulness of Bread, and abundance of Idleness, not strengthening the Hand of the Poor and Needy, Haughtiness, and committing abomination before God. Ezek. 16. 49.* Therefore saith God (so let us suppose, applying to our selves what he said of that wicked People) *I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me, and if not, I will know. Gen. 18. 21.* I will have it made evident to all the World, that I deal not rigorously with the worst of Men, nor execute Wrath upon them, till it be certain, that nothing is to be said for them, either by themselves or others, why they should not be destroyed.

Suppose then we now heard God saying to every one of us, as here to the unjust Steward. *How is it, that I heard this of thee? What say'st thou in thy own defence? Is it true that I have heard, or no? Hast thou wasted my Goods or not? If it be not true, where are thy Accounts? Shew them me, and make it appear that thou art wrong'd, and hast been a faithful Servant unto me. And if it be true, then say all that thou hast to say by way of Excuse, and thou shalt have a fair hearing, and all the favour and allowance, that in reason can be afforded thee.*

Now let us try, what it is we have to plead. Can we deny the Fact? Have we been so faithful

ful as to make no waste? It hath been shewn we cannot. Our own Consciences testify against us, that we have been so very negligent in the management of our Master's Goods, that very few of us ever well consider'd what things they are which God hath committed to our care, or what use he hath commanded us to make of them. In many things we offend all. If we say, that we have no Sin, we deceive our selves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our Sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 Joh. 1. 8. 9. All that we have to depend upon is God's Promise, to forgive upon our Confession. We must therefore all plead guilty, and every one cry out with the Publican, *God be merciful to me, a Sinner.*

If this be all that is required of us, our Accounts (we are ready to believe) will easily be made; and we need not much to trouble our selves about them. Let what will be wasted by us, whilst we confess the Waste which we have made, we are safe enough through the Promise of a Pardon. We have therefore no more to say but this, Lord, we have wasted very much, lo, here is all that remains, and for that which is wanting, we plead thy Promise of Forgiveness. We confess we have been unfaithful and unjust, but we know that thou art both faithful and just, and canst not go back from thy Word, or break thy Promise.

And we may indeed be very sure of this, that God will always be righteous, how wickedly soever we behave our selves. But there is yet something else that we ought to be sure of too, that is, That our Confession be the Confession of true Penitents, who cease to do evil, and learn

to do well; who not only confess, but forsake our Sins; and that the Promise of Forgiveness is to such as we are. We shall waste much as long as we live through other Infirmities, but we must take heed of wilful Waste, and being careless in our Duty; for tho' God expects not to find us innocent, and free from every Offence or Failing; yet he expects still an Account of our Honesty and Sincerity, and that we take all possible care not to sin. And what now do our Consciences answer to this? We have broken the Laws of God, and therefore cannot be justified by a Legal or perfect obedience; but have we obey'd the Gospel, and perform'd the Conditions on which Grace and Mercy are promised through JESUS Christ, the only Saviour of Sinners? Suppose then that God shall ask us, How is it, that I hear this of you, That you have not been faithful in the new Covenant of Grace made in great Goodness with Sinners in JESUS Christ? Shew how your Evangelical Accounts stand; and whatsoever you can fairly put upon the Account of my well beloved SON, in whom I am well pleased, shall be allowed of, and for his sake remitted unto you: Whatsoever he will take upon himself, shall not be charged upon you.

Will we now say, *We have an Advocate with the Father JESUS Christ the Righteous, and he is the Propitiation for our Sins, and not for our's only, but for the Sins of the whole World?* As we are taught, 1 Joh. 2. 1. 2. *He was made by thee Sin for us, who knew no Sin, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him.* 2. Cor. 5. 21. *This I confess is the only Plea that will stand us in stead, and make our Accounts passable.* But then are we

sure

sure, that we have any right thus to plead? Are we such as can thus truly plead? Tho' Christ have offered up himself a propitiatory Sacrifice for the Sins of the whole World, so that *whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting Life*, yet they that believe not, shall be damned. Mar. 16. 16. Believers are made the Righteousness of God in him. Their Faith in him is accepted for Righteousness, but then it is such a Faith as purifieth their Hearts, and worketh by Love, no other Faith will avail any thing to their Justification and Salvation. And are we able to account for such a Faith. JESUS is the Propitiation for our Sins, but it is hereby we must know, that we know him to be so effectually to us, or that we so believe in him, as by our Faith in him to be justified, if we keep his Commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him. 1 Joh. 2. 3. 4. Therefore, let every one that nameth the Name of Christ, as his Advocate and Propitiation, depart from Iniquity. 2 Tim. 2. 19. else must he not hope to have his Sins cover'd, and pass'd over on his Account.

Now what can we say to all this? Have we by considering God's wonderful goodness to us, and our most unworthy Behaviour towards him, the greatness of our Receipts, and our own wasteful Courses, truly humbled our Hearts in the sight of God, and grown vile in our own Eyes? God resisteth the Proud, but giveth Grace to the Humble. 1 Pet. 5. 5. Have we repented of all our Sins, have we broken and contrite Hearts, and a godly Sorrow working Repentance unto Life never to be repented of? The Sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit; a broken and contrite Heart;

O God, thou wilt not despise. Psal. 51. 17. Are we no longer carnally, but spiritually minded? If we walk after the Flesh we shall die, but if we through the Spirit do mortify the Deeds of the Body, we shall live. Rom. 8. Have we indeed the Spirit of Christ, and do we walk after it? There is no Condemnation to them that are in Christ JESUS, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit. Rom. 8. 1. But if any Man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. v. 9. Are we in earnest desirous, and industrious to do the Will of God, and the Work which he hath set us here to do? Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purifie unto himself, a peculiar People, zealous of good Works. Tit. 2. 14. By thus examining our selves, must we learn how to answer God, and prepare such an Account, as he will graciously accept of.

After this manner therefore, must we give in our Account every one for himself. Saying, O merciful LORD, here I lie prostrate at thy Footstool, and this I most freely to my shame confess unto thee, That thou hast given me many good Things to husband and improve to thy Honour, and my own eternal advantage. Thou knowest, and there is no hiding it from thee, that I have made great waste, and have been a very unprofitable Servant to thee, and an ill Husband for my self. I can give but a very ill Account of any thing, nor bring before thee any thing of thine own, that hath not suffer'd by being in my Hand. I confess that I have no Excuse at all for my misbehaviour; I had sufficient Instructions from thee, and had by thy Grace a power given me to do my Dury faithfully; I wanted no encouragement nor help that was needful,

ful and I knew well enough what it lay upon to be just to thee in every thing. All therefore that I have to plead for my self, and to make that very imperfect Account I can give thee of thine own passable, is thy mercy, and gracious promise of Pardon through the Mediation of the blessed JESUS, thine only begotten SON, and my gracious Redeemer. My only hope and confidence is this, that I feel the mighty power of the Spirit of Christ humbling me with the Sense of my unworthy Behaviour, and therefore I doubt not of the grace which thou hast promis'd to the humble; and making me heartily sorry and penitent for all my Sins, which I hate perfectly, and strive to forsake, mortifying, by all the means I can use, the Flesh with all its corrupt Affections and Lusts, hungering and thirsting after Righteousness; and therefore I doubt not of thy Pardon, which I most humbly sue for, through the Merits of my Saviour, nor of being filled with thy blessing, as he hath promis'd. I find I so firmly believe his holy Gospel, that I love thee above all things, and delight in doing thy Will, and count all things as nothing in comparison of thee, and can cheerfully deny my self doing and suffering any thing, how displeasing or grievous soever it be to Flesh and Blood, or how foolish soever the World accounts me for it, so that I may please thee, and continue in thy favour. Therefore gracious LORD I doubt not, but thou wilt pass by all my Infirmities, and acquit me for whatever I have hitherto done amiss.

Is it our constant practice this to examine, and find out, and to confess and beg Pardon for our manifold failings; and thus also to examine, and try our Graces, and to give God the glory of them?

them ? If it be not, we take care to prepare our Accounts, and we will never be able to excuse our great negligence therein. The weight of the matter certainly requires it, and nothing without it can make our Life safe and comfortable.

IV. God is not wanting to us, in minding us of, and calling us to this Duty. We may see him, and hear him every day calling us to him, and bidding us take notice that the end of our Stewardship draweth near, and therefore it is high time for us to see that our Accounts be ready. For besides that we have his Word written, as a constant standing Monitor to us, and we can at any time read but a very little Portion of it, wherein we may not find something or other that puts us in mind of our present mortal and uncertain condition, and of the preparations we are therein to be making for a change; and besides that he hath set up an order of Men in his Church, whose Office is to be his remembrancers to us of these things, as well as Guides and Directors in the way to Heaven. The Ministers of Christ are in his Name, and by his Authority, to be always calling upon us, and stirring us up to all diligence in this matter. *Knowing the Terror of the LORD, they are to persuade Men.* 2 Cor. 5. 11. Besides this, I say, God is daily many other ways calling on us.

By the Death of our Friends and Neighbours he doth as good as bid us make ready for our own, for we know not which of us must next go that same way of all Flesh. Their Stewardships are ended, and our own may end before the Sun arise again upon us. They, it may be, thought as little of being called away before us, as we now do

do of being called before any other of our Acquaintance, and possibly the last Funeral they were at; as little thought of their own being next, as any other of the Company. How is it possible we should hear the Bell toll for another, but we should call to mind that it will quickly toll for us? Or how should we see so many Graves as we do in every Church Yard we walk through, and not consider that the number of them will shortly be greater by our returning to the Earth? But more especially when we hear of any one's sudden Death, a thing which when it happens, and it happens not seldom, is much talk'd of, and taken great notice of by every Body, as of a sad thing, and which we are apt to tremble at, and yet can it be so sad and dreadful on no other Account but this, that it may be such an one died before his Accounts were ready; for to him who can give a good Account of himself whenever he dies, a sudden death seems to be the most desirable of any other. However, because some die suddenly, and we know not but we may do so too, every one's sudden Death that we hear of, should be a warning to us to have our Accounts always ready. And yet a more remarkable warning is such a Death, whenever we hear of any who are taken away by it in the very Act of Sin, as in Drunkenness or Adultery, or Quarrelling, or in fighting a Duel. We are apt to be concern'd for Persons so dying, and that because we have some reason to fear they can give no account of themselves that will be accepted of.

Again, is not every sickness that we fall into, a fair warning from God to make ready our Accounts? Doth any one know, when he begins
to

to be sick, whether or no he shall ever be well again? And so sensible are many of this, who take little care of preparing their Accounts against the Day of Judgment, that they are careful by all the help they can procure, to fence against death as well as they can, apprehending themselves in some danger of dying; and notwithstanding they hope that by the means of health they use, they are reasonably well arm'd or guarded against it, yet are they so provident themselves, and their Friends think it fit to remember them of it, if they seem forgetful of it, to make ready their last Will and Testament, and to dispose of all their Worldly Affairs, lest they be surprized by Death, or something else, which may disable them from doing it. And is not this a fair warning to Men of Sense to prepare for all that is to be after Death.

If we be young, how many as young, or younger than we are, may be seen sick, or dying every Day almost, and at how many Funerals of such young Persons have we been present? And if we be old, the Gray Hairs, decay of Senses and Feebleness that attend on old Age, tell us, that we are going apace downwards to the Grave, and by these Fore-runners of Death, God is calling us to him, and doth as good as say unto us, Give an Account of your Stewardships, for you grow unfit for any more Business here, and therefore may not be much longer Stewards.

When the Lightening flashes in our Face, and we hear the terrible Voice of God which breaketh the Cedars, and shaketh the Mountains, do not we see and hear him calling on us? Can we choose but think of the terrible Day, when our glorious Judge shall come with Flames of Fire, and

and with the sound of the Trumpet, to call us to an Account, and to take Vengeance on all them that obey not the Gospel of God? And whence the Pestilence flieth at Noon Day, and leaves our Towns and Cities without Inhabitants; or the Sword of War is drawn, and spareth neither Old nor Young, Rich nor Poor that stands in it's way; and when God's Judgments are abroad in the Earth, and we know not how soon they may come to our Doors; can we be so stupid, as not to hear God in all these warning us to have our Accounts in readiness?

If we have been at any time put into some Fear, whether there was any reason for it or no; and we have been in great danger of Death, by any Accident which hath befallen us, and by the good Providence of God, have escap'd out of it with our Lives, it may be to the great wonder of our Selves, and all our Neighbours, can we chuse but make some Reflections on our fears, and wonderful Escapes, and consider that God by them all would give us warning to be always watching, and making ready for his last coming to call us out of the World by Death?

O how gracious is God to us? What a wonderful patience and forbearance doth he exercise towards us? What cause have we of daily Praise and Thanksgiving given us by our merciful God, who notwithstanding we have so long provok'd him by wasting his Goods, yet doth not suddenly turn us out of our Stewardship, as we have deserv'd, but is pleas'd to grant us usually a great deal of time to consider in, and to amend what hath been so long amiss; and in that time gives us
many

many warnings, and frequently puts us in mind of our Duty, and calls on us to provide for our selves ere it be too late. Tho' he will not let us know before hand what Hour he will come in to call for our Accounts, yet he hath told us he will certainly come, and lest we should forget his coming, he often shews himself, as it were, on the way towards us, and after sundry manners appears unto us, as if he were just upon us, and bidding us make haste to meet him. Yea, his telling us this beforehand, that he will come as a Thief in the Night, when all is hush'd and quiet, and sleep hath clos'd up all our Senses, and no such thing is fear'd or thought on; is a very gracious warning to us to be always watching over our Business, and to be always ready, that so the suddenness of his coming may be no Surprize to us, nor do us any hurt at all.

Let us therefore make good use of this great goodness of our God, and take heed how we abuse his patience and long-suffering. He is not willing that any of us should perish, and therefore he spares us long, and all the while he spareth us, gives us one warning after another, and daily calls upon us to repent, that we may be saved. Let us hearken to his call, and take kindly the warnings which he gives us, and let not his mercy be lost unto us. Let us ply our Work, and make up our Accounts in due time.

Let us call to remembrance all our Receipts, and how many of his Goods we are to account for. This it concerns us to do with all possible exactness. *For to whom much is given, of him much will be required.* Luk. 12. 48. It concerns therefore

fore every one of us to enquire how much hath been given him of any kind, how much Wealth, how much strength and health, how many good Parts, Understanding, Memory, Wit, Eloquence; how many Friends, how much Credit and Reputation, how much Honour and Power, how much Time, how many fair Opportunities, and great Advantages, how many Helps and Encouragements, all these will be required of us. How little is this thought of by most Men and Women; who are always ready enough to think of what they want, but rarely take account of one half that they have receiv'd, and shall be charg'd on their Account.

Let us enquire what good Improvement we have made with every thing that we have received, that is, how much good we have done with every thing, and whether the good which we have done, bear a just proportion to the things that we have receiv'd. *God expects his own with Usury.* Mat. 25. 27. We must bring in glory to him, and Profit to the World, by Trading wisely and industriously with his Goods. O that they who have, by reason of their great Receipts, many advantages of doing much good above other Men, would consider this in time, and so use the advantages they have, as not to be the greatest Losers themselves at last, by their present Abundance and Opportunities of doing much good to others and themselves. Most of our Gentlemen in Place of Power and Authority, and all our rich Men whether Gentlemen or others; and above all the Stewards of God's Ministries the Ministers of Christ, according to their several Receipts of Dignity, Learning, Reven-

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nues, Health and Strength, Credit and Reputation, and Power of influencing those who are inferior to them, will find that the greater their Receipts of any sort are, the greater Improvement will be required, and a greater Account they must be able to make, or they will have the Reward of unjust Stewards.

Let us hasten our Work, and compleat our Accounts as soon as we can. God hath already given us many warnings to do so, and whether we have not had the last warning that will be given us, we know not. The time is short that we are to make our Improvements in, and it is as uncertain when we shall be call'd on to give an Account of what Improvement we have made of every thing. We ought to be asham'd that we have wasted so much time, and done so little good with so many good things as we have so long a time had the use of; and we should be as much afraid to waste our time any longer now, that we have left so little of it to our selves, and have so much to do in it. What will become of us, if we shall this Night be call'd out of the World, and no good Improvement be made by us; and therefore we can give no good Account unto God?

Let us take then the wisest course that can be for our selves to make our Account very easy to our selves, and acceptable to God. That is, Let us first be very careful to abstain from all things that appear sinful, and add no new ones to the old, the charge being too great already; and next let us be doing all the good we can, for we may be sure God will put that to our Account, whether we remember it or no. In the third place let us blot our past Sins by a sincere Repen-

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tance, for every Sin truly repented of, is blotted out of our Account, and put on the Account of Christ, who hath satisfied for it. And Lastly, Let us every Night e're we sleep, examine how all Things stand on our Account, and be sure to set all streight. The darkness of the Night, and the sleep we are going to take, represent unto us Death in its Image; and thereby should mind us to go to Bed, as we would go into the Grave; and to have our Accounts ready as we are concern'd to have them when we die; because we know not whether or no we shall ever awake again: This therefore is one of God's calls, and let us hearken unto it as we love our Souls; and see that we sleep not in Impenitence. Whenever we break off our Sins by Repentance, and with the Sincerity of Resolution return to our Obedience unto God, our Accounts are made up, and we are sure they will be allow'd of for the sake of our blessed Saviour JESUS Christ.

WE have been taught in the first two Verses of this Parable, what our present Condition in this World is, and how we stand related to God, who made us, and placed us here; towards, to whom he is the great and universal LORD, and Master of all the World, which is his great Family, hath committed four Portion, more or less, as it seems good to him, of his Goods to manage, and improve to his glory and

Verse 3. and 4.

And the Steward said within himself, What shall I do? For my Lord taketh away from me the Stewardship; I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the Stewardship, they may receive me into their Houses.

WE have been taught in the first two Verses of this Parable, what our present Condition in this World is, and how we all stand related to God, who made us, and placed us here, as Stewards, to whom he, as the great and universal LORD, and Master of all the World, which is his great Family, hath committed some Portion, more or less, as it seems good to him, of his Goods to manage, and improve to his glory, and

and our own advantage; and farther, that we are all great Masters of these Goods, and that this is not unknown to God, but he observes us how we behave our selves, and will certainly call us to an Account for our Misbehaviour, that the end of this Life is the end of our Stewardship, and that it greatly concerns us to consider in what state we stand, and what Account we are able to make; and lastly, That is not wanting to us in putting us in remembrance to prepare our Accounts, that they may be ready whenever he shall call for them. All this our blessed JESUS hath taught us by an obvious and easy similitude of a rich Man, who hearing that his Steward had wasted his Goods, calleth him, and lets him know, that he is resolved to turn him out of his Office, and bids him bring in his Accounts; that he may examine them, and use him afterwards, as he shall see Cause for it.

Now in the next five Verses which follow, he tells us, what Effect this had upon that unjust Steward, and what course he took to provide for himself. Not designing thereby to teach us to imitate him in his wicked Craft and policy; but by shewing us the Disposition of such Men, and how shifty and cunning they are for the things of this World, to make us asham'd, if by honest and wise Courses, such as we may easily take, and God allows, we do not as carefully provide for the Things of a better, and eternal Life.

Let us to this end, take notice of the shift which this unjust Man invented to Live by after his Stewardship was taken from him, and of his whole

whole Behaviour, after his Master had call'd him to give an Account. His Master had told him plainly, That he might be no longer Steward, and had commanded him to give an Account of his Stewardship for the time he had been in it. And now we may observe what Effect this had upon him.

1. It awaken'd him into a serious Consideration. *He said within himself,*

2. It put him into some perplexity and trouble of mind, he said, *What shall I do?*

3. Upon what Account he was thus troubled; and it was two fold.

1. His loss of the Stewardship whereby he had liv'd at his ease, and enjoy'd his pleasure.

2. The difficulty of finding any other way of Living so for the future. First, saith he, *My Lord taketh away from me the Stewardship.* And then Secondly he adds, *I cannot dig, to beg, I am ashamed.*

4. His Resolution upon this Consideration; *I am resolv'd what to do, that when I am put out of the Stewardship they may receive me into their Houses.* What that was we are told in the next three Verses.

I pretend not, that all the Particulars of this Relation of the unjust Steward's Behaviour are to be accommodated to the main End of the Parable: Yet may we learn something from each of them, which

which may be useful to us, and therefore I shall say something of them briefly in that Order as they here stand.

1. The Master's threatening this unjust Steward to cast him off, had this Effect on him, that it brought him into a serious Consideration; it made him think and contrive what might be fittest for him to do. He had gone on long in his way of Profuseness and waste, like an unthinking Fool, as such wicked Men generally are. But then when his Master had told him he must be no longer Steward, and he saw there was no Remedy, but he must give up an Account, such as he could: Then he said within himself, that is, he began to think, or consider: What should he trouble his Head with, or what needed he to consider; who had all that he had a mind to; enough to use, and enough to waste, and all without any cost or trouble to him? He had not his Master's Eye always over him, nor did he fear that any Body would give himself the trouble to inform against him, and therefore he took his pleasure, and made what waste he pleas'd.

We see here the Temper of Wicked Men, and especially of such of them, as are bewitch'd with Pleasures and carnal Delights; they regard nothing but the present Gratification of their Lusts; they are not apt to consider what will come after, or in what all their Pleasures are like to end. Solitile are such Men apt to think of preparing their Accounts, that they have hardly their Minds so much at Liberty, as to remember that there is any such thing as an Account of their Lives and Actions to be given; or that God takes any no-

rice at all of them, or indeed so much as that there is a Lord over them, that all they have they had from him, or are at all oblig'd unto him for any thing. They seldom, it may be, if ever think that they do amiss, or can be made sensible that any thing is Evil which they do, and take a Pleasure in doing. No, till Wicked Men be detected; and an Accusation brought in against them, and they be apprehended, and begin to fear that Punishment is not far off, they know not how to be serious, or to think in earnest of their Condition.

This is a thing that's too obvious, Instruction, Advice, Intreaty, good Counsel or Reproof signify nothing to the thriving Sinner; no Threatnings will move him, so long as the Evil threatened seems at a distance. No such things as these make any Impression on him, as long as he hath any thing to waste, and suffereth no more by it, but the Loss of what is wasted. Such an one tastes the sweetness of the Honey, and eats greedily of it, and fears not the sting so long as he neither feels nor sees it. His Conscience is laid asleep by the deceitfulness of sin, and you cannot awake it, cry as loud as you will to him. Nothing will awake it, but Thunder, till he find him in present Danger of perishing, he considereth not that there is any danger of it. *The Transgression of the Wicked saith within my Heart that there is no fear of God before his Eyes; For he flattereth himself in his own Eyes, untill his Iniquity be found to be hateful.* Psal. 36. 1. 2.

Let us therefore take heed how we give ourselves over to a pleasant Life; for the Pleasures of Sin are so powerful, as to make us forget our selves

to be rational Creatures. All the Discourse they will suffer us to have within our selves is that of our Lusts, reason is allow'd to say nothing at all; nor can the Man be heard to speak, for the noise of the Swine both within us, and without us. Nothing but some present fear, or pain, or sickness, will silence our Brutish Affections, and give us Leave to talk with, and hearken to our selves. How many of us are sad Examples of this Dominion that Sin hath got over us by the help of vain Pleasures? Such a Dominion, that we grow in a little time the veriest Slaves in the World to it, going tamely to perform all it's vilest Drudgeries, and not daring so much as whisper a little against it to our selves in secret; our Thoughts are no longer our own. Only when we think we hear God's last Call, when we think the Stewardships going, when sickness hath fasten'd us to our Beds, and Death seems to stand at the Bed-side, and we have no hope of living any longer, then we begin to consider, when we are in such a fear and Distraction, that we know not where to begin to consider, nor what to think on. This is a very lamentable Condition, that we bring our selves into by the waste of our Master's Goods; we waste our Estates in feeding our Lusts, till Want pinch us as it did the Prodigal after he had spent all with riotous Living, and would have been glad to be fed with the Swine he was set to wait upon, might he but have been allow'd his Belchful of such coarse Fare, and then our Lusts thus fed waste our inward Goods, our Bodily Health and Strength bringing us to Death's Door, and our mental Goods, our Understanding and Freedom of choice, and we can neither consider,

nor resolve on anything that is good for us. Only some severe Affliction, which disableth us at present to relish the Pleasures of Sin, sets our Minds a little at Liberty to think; and truly if it please God by his severest Rod to awake us, and to bring us so effectually to our selves, that we return unto him by a true Repentance to chastise us severely, is the greatest kindness can be done us.

But all that we hear of this Man's use that he made of his Master's taking the Stewardship from him, comes but to this, *He said within himself.* He consider'd of something, and grew somewhat thoughtful. But we hear nothing of what he said to his Master, or to any of his Fellow Servants, and yet something in all Reason one would expect to have heard said to them. An humble Confession of his Fault to his Master whom he had chiefly sinned against, and then a more publick Confession to the Family of the Offence and Scandal he had given unto all therein. Something of this nature would have become him very well. But all that was said by him was within himself.

Wicked Men even after they are detected, and they find themselves in danger, are very hardly brought to acknowledge their guilt, or to make an humble, free, full and ingenuous Confession of their Sin, together with the aggravations of it either to God or Man. An Oath is readier to deny the Fault withal, and it may be an Imprecation to second it; or at least an Excuse or Pretence to lessen and extenuate it, is usually more ready than such a Confession.

How hard a thing is it to humble our proud Hearts before God? We are asham'd to own
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our selves to be so vile and abominable, as in truth we are. We must, in so doing, acknowledge that we have been not only wicked, but foolish; that we have not only wrong'd God, but undone our selves. But if ever we hope for mercy, let us lay aside our Pride. And whatever it shall please God to take from us, or lay upon us a Chastisement for the waste we have made of his Goods, let us most humbly acknowledge, that he doth justly, and that our Sins have deserv'd far worse than yet we have suffer'd. *He that covereth his Sins shall not prosper; but he that confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy.* Prov. 28. 13. *Confess your Faults one to another.* Jam. 5. 16. We should all take the same course that the penitent prodigal did, go and fall down before God, saying every one of us, *Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son.* Luk. 15. Let us first confess to God, and in the next place where our Fault is publick and scandalous, and Offence is given to the Church, let our Confession be as publick as our Sin; that so we may do all we can to restore those, whom we by our Example may have led into Sin; and remove the Occasion that we have given the Adversaries to speak Evil of the Religion which we profess. But this is a Lesson, which how necessary soever, is very hard to be learn'd by most of us. We are not asham'd to sin, but we are asham'd to do Penance for our Sins, that is, we are asham'd to let our Neighbours know that we are penitent, for they knew already that we have sinned, and 'tis because they know it, that they ought also to be satisfied of our Repentance for it; but this we are unwilling

X

they should be, that is, we are not truly penitent, we are not humbled enough to confess our Faults, tho' all the World know them.

2. The second thing here to be taken Notice of, is, the perplexity and trouble of Mind which this evil Man fell into, so soon as he awak'd, and began to consider his Condition. He found that he had run on so rashly and giddily, muddled with the pleasures of a voluptuous Life, that he had outrun his Wits, he had bewildred himself, and got into such a Maze, that which way now he should turn himself he knew not, but cried out, *What shall I do?* This, indeed, is the natural consequent of Inconsideration. He that will not be at the trouble to consider well what he is a doing, or whither the way wherein he walks will bring him in the end, but go on like one in a Dream, following the vain imaginations of his own Head, whilst reason, which should guide him, is asleep, is too, for the most part, like such an one that walks in his Sleep, in a strange Confusion whenever he awakes. He finds himself on the brink of a Precipice, or in some very dangerous Place, and the very Apprehension of his danger doth so Confound him, that it proves sometimes fatal. Wicked Men following inconsiderately their various Lusts and Appetites, find, when they come to themselves, and make use of their Reason, that they have been all this while going towards *Hell*, and now are come so near it, that they have some cause to fear 'tis too late to think of returning towards Heaven. They have so long disused the narrow way that leads thither, that they know not how to find it, or walk in it.

And

And here, indeed, we see the reason why such People are so hardly perswaded to enter into any serious consideration of their present, either State or Duty. They find that the thoughts of these are very troublesome, and mightily disquiet 'em, they are almost distracted whenever they begin to think into what dangers and difficulties they have plung'd themselves, and how hard they have made it for them to be sav'd. I have heard of some, who because of this, could not endure to hear any one in the Family read a good Book, that put them in mind of these things, but would order it to be thrown aside, saying, it was enough to make one mad. And, indeed, their own Consciences, did they hearken to them, would do as much, accusing them of so much folly and madness, that they would begin to feel something of Hell in their Breasts. And therefore they use all the shifts they can to silence them, that they may at least be quiet, when they can hardly hope to be safe.

Let us all therefore take heed of going on securely in any sinful Courses, wasting the good things which we have from God, lest when we begin to consider our ways and doings, we find that we have gone so far from God, that it may be fear'd he is quite departed from us, and gives us no hopes of recovering the light of his Countenance any more, and we shall not know what to do.

The wasteful Steward, after his Master had discover'd his wickedness, and threaten'd him for it, shou'd, one wou'd have thought, have, in the most humble manner, Address'd unto him, beseeching his mercy, and saying, Sir, I most humbly

bly cast my self at your Feet, and earnestly beg of you to pardon me what is past, and say, what it is your pleasure that I shall do towards making you some satisfaction, and you shall see that nothing shall be wanting that is in my power to do. Say then, good Sir, *What shall I do?* But then in order to the obtaining of this favour, he should first have said, *What have I done?* He should have Examined his whole Conversation, and laid open to his Master all his Faults, which he was guilty of in an humble Confession, declaring his detestation of all his wicked ways, and his abhorring of himself for his great Baseness; but we hear nothing of all this.

Men that have done very wickedly, when they begin to be afraid they shall be punish'd for it, are not so apt to consider their own Sins and Demerits, as to cast about for their safety and impunity. They think of a Pardon, but not of Repentance, and shew some Contrivance, but no Remorse; *I bearkened and heard (saith God) but they spake not aright; no Man Repented him of his Wickedness,* saying, *What have I done?* Jer. 8. 6. The Steward's care was quite another thing than how to give his Master Satisfaction, or which way he might amend his Evil Ways; no, all his Care was how to live for the future, at the same rate he had done for the time past; and how he might, if possible, escape being cast into Prison, and being made to feed on Bread and Water, after he had lost his Stewardship. And thus the habitual Sinner, when his last Sickness comes to call him out of this World, seems mightily troubled and concern'd what to do. His trouble is not that he hath been a Sinner, but that he

he must not now live any longer to enjoy his sinful Pleasures ; not that he hath dishonour'd God, and abused his Goodness, but that he fears his Wrath and Vengeance, and that Hell is just opening to receive him into Torments. And now, saith he, *What shall I do ?* I must live no longer, I must leave behind me all that I loved, and was delighted in. For this he weeps, and it must be called Repentance. I have (saith he within himself) but faint hopes of escaping Hell, if there be one, and what shall I do ? And for this he weeps again, and then hopes he hath repented, and so dieth quietly. Alas, we are generally Lovers of Pleasures, more than Lovers of God ; and when we think our selves in danger, we would do any thing for our own safety, but little Regard shew we to God's Honour and Glory. Let us take heed how we so accustom our selves to any sin, that we begin to love it more than God, and cannot love him unless he will allow it us. Let us beware also how we call every trouble and perplexity of Mind that Affliction or Fear bring us into, by the name of Repentance, and so deceive our selves into a fatal Security. If we would not when we come to die be confounded in our Thoughts, and plunged into despair, let us Learn to Live well, that our Consciences may not then be able to accuse us of any Sin, whereof we have not sincerely repented.

3. It may be useful yet a little more to observe on what Account it was, that this Man found himself at such a Loss, that he knew not what to do. And we may see that it was upon this twofold Account. 1. That he was now to be turned out of

of his Place, which afforded him so plentiful and pleasant a way of Living. 2. The difficulty he saw of finding any other way of Living, whereby he might hope for the like Plenty and Pleasure.

First. He was told by his Lord, that he must be no longer Steward, and therefore (said he) What shall I do? For my Lord taketh away from me the Stewardship. He saith not, that he had deserv'd to have it taken away. It is his Loss only, and not his Fault that troubles him, and vexeth his mind. This, indeed, is that which troubles most Sinners, the Loss of any part of their Livelihood is a far greater Affliction to them, than the Loss of their Innocence. If God deprive them of any part of their Estates or Health; more Tears by far are usually shed, than for the Sins whereof they are guilty. They wring their Hands, and fret their Hearts, and cry out they are undone, and know not what they shall do, when they haſte but ſome very ſmall thing of this kind; but of the Loss of God's Favour, and of a good Conſcience, they have no Senſe at all. How little doth the Violation of our Faith given to God in our Baptiſm, or the Loss of our Integrity trouble any of us? How little do we grieve, and afflict our Souls before God for our breach of Covenant with him? We can ſin all the Day long, and be very merry, and are not at all concern'd to think what we ſhall do in the end thereof. So long, as we ſuffer not we are in no Perplexity.

Thus indeed it is with many of us, the World hath got poſſeſſion of our Hearts, and ſo long as

no part of that is torn from us, our Hearts bleed not, nor feel any grief. Let us therefore take heed of setting our Affection on the things that are on the Earth, and of making our Lusts our Masters. *Love not the World, neither the things that are in the World, for if any Man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him.* 1 Joh. 2. 15. *No Man can serve two Masters.* Mat. 6. 24. If we once love the World, and the things thereof, so long as we can keep it, we will not be troubled for any Want of Love to God, or for the Loss of his Love to us. And if we serve our selves, that is, our Lusts; we will never serve God, nor be concern'd for any dishonour we do him. Then serve we God, and take him for our Master, when whatever Mistress Lust commands our Service, or howsoever the World flatters us, and courts our Affections, we turn them off with Disdain, vouchsafing them no other Answer, but that of *Joseph*. *How shall I do this great Wickedness, and sin against God?* If we be not thus resolute in God's Service, notwithstanding any Worldly Loss, we shew that we are more concern'd to live in pleasure on the Earth, than to live eternally in Heaven.

Secondly, Another Ground of his perplexity and trouble, is the difficulty of finding out some other way of Life, which would afford him the same plenty and pleasure. He could at present think but of two Ways of Living, when he was put out of his Stewardship, that is, *Digging* and *Begging*, and he could not well hope, that either of these would afford him so fine a Life as that which he had hitherto had, and therefore he lays aside

aside the Thoughts of them. *I cannot dig* (saith he) *and to beg I am ashamed.* He had lived too much like a Gentleman in his Stewardship to endure either of these, or to stint himself to such a pittance as he could hope to attain to by either of them.

By *Digging* let us understand any honest Labour, Trade, or Profession; and *Begging*, a Living by the Bounty and Charity of others. And these are the only honest Ways of Living in this World, which I can say, that God allows us, and well approves of. But neither of these two please the Steward, and the Reason of it we shall see presently.

Such Men as he are not willing to be tied up to God's Allowance, that's too narrow and scant for their Appetites. Pride and Luxury will not be contented with a Competence, nor stinted by Rules, nor think we any but our Selves fit Carriers or Carvers for them. Men stand divided into two Sorts, the one of such as are able and well fitted by God to labour in one way or other, either of bodily or mental Labour, whereby they may be useful to the World, and do some good in their Generation. The other is of them who through Age or weakness, or by any Providence of God, are become unable to labour in any kind. The only Way of Living, which God approves of for the former Sort, is honest Labour, whereby some good Service is done to Men's Souls or Bodies, according to the Ability which God hath given to every one, and the Station he is at present in. For the later, who are unable to Labour, if God have not given them Friends who have made a competent Provision for them, or enabled them to provide for themselves, commanding

manding every one that can to Labour for them, and he has granted them a License to ask and receive their Charity, and expects they should take thankfully what is given them, and praising God for it, serve the World by their Prayers, as others do by their Labours.

Why are we not then contented to live as God would have us? Why will it not suffice us to live either by *Digging* or *Begging*, why, because we have not learn'd to trust in God? And why dare we not trust in him, but because we know him not? *They that know thy Name* (saith David) *will put their trust in thee; for thou LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.* Psal. 9. 10. *Trust in the LORD, and do good, so shall thou dwell in the Land, and verily thou shalt be fed.* Psal. 37. 3. But so Brutish are we many of us, that we desire to know nothing but the Vanities of this World, we have no desire to know God, and therefore we know him not, neither dare we trust him. We had rather rely upon our own Inventions and Devices. Did we think God wiser and better than we are, and did we believe his word and promise, we would rather trust to him than to our selves. God hath promised to feed us so long as we labour in doing good, and trust to him for a blessing on our labour; but hath he promis'd to feed our Lusts too? If not, we will not thank him; for we account not our selves fed, so long as these are not fed; neither can we think God so good to us, as we are to our selves, if he do not provide for all the inordinate desires of our flesh. Doing Evil therefore will do us, we think, better Service than doing Good. If we want not necessities

cessaries for the support of Nature, yet we fear we shall want superfluities for the pampering of our Bodies, if we have not cunning shifts of our own, such as Rich Men's Stewards are, many of them, too well acquainted with. Were we God's Sheep, we would know his Voice, and follow him which way soever he would lead us, and esteem that Pasture the best, which he feeds us in; and would always satisfy our selves with his Allowance, and Provision, saying, *The LORD is our Shepherd, we shall not want.* Psal. 23. 1.

I cannot dig, saith he; that is, I cannot take pains, my Business hath been to see others labour, I was never brought up to it, but have had a more gentle Education. He saith, not indeed, why he cannot, but 'tis easy to understand why, he cannot, because he will not, for that's all usually, which such mean by saying, *I cannot*. 'Tis true, there be some that cannot labour to any purpose, so as to do good either to themselves or others by their Labour; they are disabled for it, and have Infirmities enough to labour under all their Days; had the Steward been one of these, his Plea for his not labouring had been good, none better than *I cannot*, if he say the truth, and none would serve his turn but this. No Man can be bound to Impossibilities, but if this were the truth, yet would the second Plea fail him for that very reason; for because he cannot labour, therefore ought he not to be ashamed to beg, or to live by the Labour and Charity of others. O how hardly are we brought either to obey God's Command, or to submit to, and be contented with his Allowance! If we can dig, he commands we should live by Digging,

ging, and if we cannot, he alloweth us to live by Begging. But we can away with neither; whatever is God's Will, and our Duty, we have some idle Pretence or other to shuffle it off with; and make some shift or other to stop the Mouth of Conscience. All is either above our strength, and we cannot; or below our Quality, and we are ashamed of it.

Know we must, that Labour of one sort or other, is the Duty of all who have Ability for it. God exempts not one of us from it, so long as he is able to undergo it. He keeps no idle Gentlemen in his Family, but such as shall one Day be made to pay dear for their idleness. Every one is to Live by an honest and profitable Calling, and to do some good Service in his Place, to what height soever either his Estate, or the Favour of his Prince, hath advanced him. Labour was at first, whilst Man was innocent, a Task enjoined him by his Maker, but a very pleasant one. He that was made Lord of the inferiour World under God, had his Work to do in it appointed him by God. He was placed in a Garden, where all things afforded both Profit and Delight; but he was not put there only to walk, or sit, and take his Pleasure, but to keep and dress the Garden; and this was a pleasure to him. It was his Sin that made Labour hard, and for his Sin God made hard Labour a part of his Punishment. *In the Sweat of thy Face (saith God) thou shalt eat thy Bread.* At first Labour was a pleasant Task to be perform'd in Obedience to God, it is since that become a heavy Burden, but such, as in Duty to God, ought with much patience to be born. He that will either o-

bey God's Command, or submit to the Punishment of his Sin, that is, he that will not Live in open Rebellion against God, must Labour so long as he is able.

And this abundantly answers the idle Gentleman's Plea for a vain course of Life, which is, That he needs not Labour, he is because of his Estate from under the Law of Necessity, and because of his Rank and Quality above such mean Drudgery. His condition in the World is a sufficient Dispensation to him from all Labour. Now what's all this, but to make the same use of God's goodness, as some Men do of their Prince his Favour, that is, to grow, by being too plentifully fed, too wanton to obey their Feeder, to grow too great for Government, and too goodly in their own Eyes to live in Subjection? What's this, but to say in effect, that God gives those Servants in the Family the best Wages, who do him the least Service? Or that he loves to see a Company of gay things about him which do no good, but stand like fine Pictures to be looked on? Yea, what saith the Gentleman in this, but that he is one of the things that the World may best spare, and that he is ambitious to be thought good for nothing, like the Barren Figtree, making some shew and flourish, but cumbering the Ground, and drawing away the Nourishment from more useful things, and so fit only to be cut down; or like the unsavory Salt, which having lost its proper vertue of seasoning other things, deserves only to be trodden under Foot of Men? He that pleads a Dispensation from Labour, doth himself no better Office, than to prove Men ought to look upon him as a despicable Thing.

That

That indeed is all the Honour that the idle Gentleman deserves, and should he be served as he deserves too, we should quickly be rid of him: For, saith the *Apostle*. *1 Thes 3. 10. If any Man will not work, neither let him eat.* Nothing of this is said to abridge Gentlemen in any Gentile Recreation, which is innocent, or to rob them of any Honour or Respect due unto the Place and Rank they are set in, but only to let them understand how they are to deserve their Honour and Wealth, and other advantages; and what use they are to make of them, that they may not be the worse for them.

I cannot dig, saith this wicked Steward, and so say many more. But let them well consider what they say. Is it true, or is it false, that they cannot? God, 'tis certain, hath made it every one's Dury, that hath Health and Ability of Body or Mind, to Work and Labour as he hath fitted him, and call'd him to it. If then there be strength, there can be no excusing our selves on any Account, unless it be want of Opportunity, which I think no Man can want long, the Necessities of Mankind which call for it, are so very many. If then such Persons Work not, it must be either pride or sloth that hinders them; and which of them soever it be, it is their sin. Some will say, it may be, that it is Disuse has made it too hard for them. And what is that but to plead their former Idleness in Excuse of their present Idleness? For why did they not use themselves to it? What Warrant had they to spend any part of their time vainly? Our Disuse of what is our Duty is our Sin, and if we now be made to suffer for it, 'tis just, and we have no cause at all to complain!

plain. That which we have made hard through our Negligence, and never using our selves to it, is very fit now to be imposed upon us, that the Hardship which we our selves have occasion'd, may be some Punishment for our Laziness. Who should pity us, if we go groaning under a Load which had not had any heaviness more than we had Strength for, had not we our selves made it too heavy for us. Was it not our Luxury and Sloth which decay'd our Strength? Have we not weaken'd our selves by intemperance? Have we eat, and drunk, and slept into such a grossness both of Body and Mind, that we have made our selves unfit for any Service of God or Man? How many of us devour, at this rate, even all the good things we were once possess'd, eating up their Strength, and drinking up their Understanding and Memory, and Conscience, so that they leave themselves nothing either of Soul or Body to work withal. Such Persons indeed cannot Work, and if they meet with no Charity from others, they deserve as little as they find. If they find any, tho' it may be a Duty in others to afford it them, yet is it so only because God hath commanded it, not because they have deserved it.

But the vain Man, when he hath by his vanity reduced himself to Poverty, is as much ashamed to beg, as he is unable to dig. *To beg.* (saith he) *I am ashamed.* And so indeed he hath reason enough to be, considering how he comes to stand in need of Begging. But that seems to be least of any thing considered by him, and is not the thing he is ashamed of. Such Men have, by the custom of sinning, too hard Faces to blush for any Sin, be it never so shameful. It is no shame

to beg, or to be relieved by the Charity of others ; it is the way of subsisting, that God alloweth the Poor and Needy, and both by his Command hath he made Provision for them, and by his Promise he hath encourag'd them to rely upon it. It is indeed, a shame for him that can Labour by Begging, to abuse the Charity of good Men, and to rob the truly Needy of his Due ; and 'tis also a shame to make one's self a Beggar, and to be by his sin in a craving, when by doing his Duty, he might have been in a giving Condition. Sloth or Prodigality, Idleness and Waste, will, when things are well examined, be found to have caus'd more Beggery in the World than any thing else, and I believe of all the Beggars we have, and they are by much too many, for one who hath been made a Beggar by any other means, we may find three who have made themselves so by sloth and wastefulness, and therefore ought indeed to be ashamed of their sin, but not of the just punishment of it ; this should be born with all humble submission, and that confess'd, and repented of with much Shame and Grief. But such Men as this unjust Steward have been us'd to a Life, which have taught them to be ashamed of nothing but Living gently, that is, wastingly and vainly. And if they say, they are ashamed to beg, tho' they say truly, by their being ashamed, we are not to understand their Modesty, but their Pride.

I shall here only desire we would take notice of the two great Rubs and Stumbling blocks in our Way of Duty, and Living Religiously, and these are Difficulty and Shame. We are generally either too Lazy, or too Proud, to do what our

Great Lord and Master commands us. 'Tis hard-
 says one, and I cannot do it. 'Tis mean and
 disgraceful, says another, and I am ashamed to
 do it. Some Duties call for too much pains, and
 others for too much Humility, and we are too
 idle to do those, and too proud to stoop to these.
 And hence it is, that we think we have a suffi-
 cient Apology and Excuse for our vainful and sin-
 ful Course of Life. Every sin passeth with us, for
 a Sin of Infirmary, and it must be thought above
 our strength to do otherwise, and on that Ac-
 count a very venial Sin, which will easily be for-
 given. When indeed all is no more but a diffi-
 culty, and that such as we have made to our selves,
 by giving way so long to our sinful Humors and
 Lusts, till they have got the Mastery of us, and
 are grown into confirm'd Habits, and now re-
 quire more pains to break them off, than we can
 endure to bestow upon them. Or else our Sins
 are fashionable, and we do no other thing in pra-
 ctising them, than what we see most Men, who
 are accounted Persons of any Note in the World
 usually do. And should we do otherwise, we
 should be laugh'd at as too precise, and affecting
 Singularity, or as those who want Breeding,
 yea, and common Civility; and this we are asha-
 med of; Pride will not suffer us to bear such a
 Reproach, tho' it be only for obeying God, ra-
 ther than Men; and for being more desirous of
 the Testimony of a good Conscience, than of a
 Reputation amongst them, who seek the Praise
 of Men, more than that which is of God only.
 O what a wretched thing is Man become, that
 can do nothing but sin, and is ashamed of
 every Thing, but that which alone is shame-
 ful,

ful, that is, to dishonour God, and ruin himself!

We have before said, that we, every one of us are Stewards to God for every thing we have, and that we shall find, upon Examination of our selves, that we have been great Masters too of the Goods committed to our care. That we must give an Account to God of the use that we have made of every thing; and we are apt to be too forgetful of this; that God however is not hasty with us, but several times gives us warning, that the Time of our Stewardship, draws near an end, and to see that we have our Accounts ready against that Time come. And now let us suppose that the Habitual Sinner, who hath lived loosely, and been wasting all upon his Lusts, which God gave him for better Uses, hath received his last Call to make ready his Accounts, that he is now in his last sickness, and that within a few Days he must die. Suppose we, I say, that he is sensible of this, and consider it; will he not be in greater perplexity and trouble, than the Unjust Steward is here said to have been in? Will not his Conscience then awakened by the present apprehension of Death, suggest unto him very melancholy Thoughts? Whether he be able or willing to speak out, and discover his Troubles of Soul to those that are about him or no, will he not cry within himself—What shall I do? Whither am I now going? What Course shall I now take, that I may depart comfortably and safely out of this World? I see there's no staying for me any longer here: my Lord taketh from me the Stewardship, and I must be turned naked, as I was born, out of this World. And what now

Can I do for my self to any good purpose. I cannot dig, the Day of my Life, which was the Time of Labour, is now just closing in that night, wherein no Man can work. And what can I do? I have lost the Opportunity of working out my own Salvation, and what shall I now do to be saved? I should have been all this while bringing forth the Fruits of Holiness, the end whereof would have been eternal Life; but instead thereof, I have wasted all, and bestowed all I had for those Riches and Pleasures of this Life, which hinder'd any good Fruit I should have brought forth from coming to perfection. What shall I now do? VVhat Account can I give of any Improvement which I should have made, now that all is wasted. Alas, I have nothing but the mercy of my Lord to rely upon, if this fail me, I am undone for ever. And what shall I now do to make sure of that? It is promised only to the Penitent, and which way shall I be sure of the Sincerity of my Repentance? This implieth amendment of Life, but I have no more Time left to live in; at least, it implieth such a sincere change of Heart and Affection, and so strong and stedfast a purpose and Resolution to amend as would be sure to hold, and be no more broken, should I yet live longer; but I now find it very hard to be in any measure assured, that my Affections are thus really changed, and that I have so unfeignedly resolved, that strong Temptations would again, as they have often done, prevail over me, and change into the same wicked Man I have always been. I have now nothing left me whereby to make sure of God's mercy but fervent Prayer. *But to beg I am ashamed.* The Prayer of the VVicked is Abomination

nation to the Lord, how then can such a wicked VVretch as I am, hope that God will hear my Prayers; when I reflect upon the Course of Life I have all along led, and how I slighted all the mercies of God, and hearkened not to the many earnest Calls, and most gracious Invitations, and daily warning that he gave me to repent, and return to his Obedience, and lay hold on his mercy, what Reason can I find to hope, that he will not do as he hath sometimes threatened, saying, *When ye make many Prayers I will not hear, when ye spread forth your Hands, I will hide mine Eyes from you.* Isa. 1. 15. *Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my Hand, and no Man regarded. I also will laugh at your Calawity, I will mock when your fear cometh. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer.* Prov. 1. 24. 26. 28. VVhat then can I do, but despair, and die?

Why will we now that we have the day to labour, and do the works of God in, now that we are sure, that our Prayers may be heard, and that if we turn to the LORD with all our hearts, God will be found of when we seek him, lose the opportunity which he gives us, and by delaying our Repentance to our last Sickness, or God's call whatever it be, run the hazard of being driven to this lamentable state of Fear and Perplexity, so that we shall not know which way to turn us, nor to be able to quiet our own Minds, or be capable of any Consolation in the needfullest time of trouble?

4 Let us now observe the Resolution that this Man came to upon his Consideration. *I am resolved*

solu'd (saith he) *what to do, that when I am put out of the Stewardship, they may receive me into their Houses.* And what it was that he was resolv'd to do, we are told in the three following Verses.

5. *So he call'd every one of his Lord's Debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my Lord?*

6. *And he said, an hundred Measures of Oyl, And he said unto him, take thy Bill, and sit down quickly, and write Fifty.*

7. *Then said he unto another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred Measures of Wheat. And he said unto him, take thy Bill, and write fourscore.*

After the same manner we must suppose him to have treated with all his Lord's Debtors, how many soever they were. And here we shall but observe two things. *First*, How quickly he resolv'd. *Secondly*, What he resolv'd upon.

Observe how quickly he comes to a resolution. At first, he was at a stand, *What shall I do?* But having considered the two ordinary ways whereby Men live, Labour and Charity, he presently finds them not for his purpose, and layeth aside any farther thoughts of either of them, and immediately resolves upon another way. Consideration is a thing that too few make much use of, not only because it is troublesom, and takes us off from the liberty we love

love to have in the Enjoyment of our Ease and Pleasure, but because it discovers to us, and brings to our Remembrance things that we love not, neither desire to take notice of. And yet, Resolution is harder than Consideration, and they that sometimes consider a great deal, yet break it off before they come up to a Resolution; for as us Considering discovereth what's fit to be done, so it also shews us the difficulties in the way, and the dangers that may follow, and therefore after we have considered, we often want the Courage to resolve. And yet, after all, we find it harder than both the former, to stand to our Resolution, and not to fall back from it; because when we come to the execution of what we have well resolv'd upon, our Lusts and Corrupt inclinations begin to shew themselves in earnest, and make such Opposition, as we are too seldom stout enough to withstand.

Thus, I say, we find it, when the thing is good, and our Duty. But now for the doing of Evil, little Consideration will serve our turn, and if more be needful, we find the work pleasant enough, and we can quickly resolve, and find it not difficult at all to execute, and do as we have resolv'd. Here the Consideration is not what is lawful, or what in it self is fittest to be done, but what is pleasant, and will afford us most satisfaction to the Flesh. It is easy to resolve where Corrupt nature strongly inclines, and the Affections persuade, and there is no fear of God to restrain, nor Modesty to refrain, and the Custom and Fashion of the World Countenance. Every thing in such a case is with us, and nothing against us, and this was the case of the Unjust Steward.

Vice

Vice discovers all its beauty to us at first sight, and is every where to be seen, and when we see it we find it like us, and so presently fall in love with it, because 'tis easy and suitable to our humour we bid it welcome, and because 'tis fashionable, we blush not, and therefore away with both digging and begging, we are resolv'd this shall be it, whatever come on't.

And now what is it? Why, something he resolves to do, it's no matter how wicked a thing it be, whereby he may to oblige his Lord's Debtors, that when he turns him out of his House, they may receive him into theirs. Here's the end he aims at, that he may still live plentifully, at whose cost he cares not, nor whether by right or wrong; any means therefore that will help him to compass this end he resolves to use. Not a thought of recovering his Master's favour, because that could not, he now found, be kept but by doing justly, and doing so, he could be no longer at liberty to waste what he pleas'd; nor a word of redeeming his Credit and Reputation with Good Men, let that sink or swim, so he can, with any sort of Men, find credit enough to live wastefully. He resolves to curry favour with bad Men like himself, and if he cannot find such made to his Hand, to do his best to make them so. However, his Master may endeavour to make him poorer than he was, he resolves he shall never make him honest. He had liv'd by abusing him, and so he will still if he can. And possibly this was no hard matter for him to do, he had been long enough Steward to be acquainted with his Master's Debtors, and possibly one time or other he had had an opportunity

nity to try their Tempers, and which way to deal with every one of them, so as to serve himself of them. He was to them in his Master's stead, and kept all the Accounts for him. He therefore could find a way to put a trick upon him well enough, so that he could but bring em to comply with him, both to their own, and his Advantage. And thus he brings the matter about. Whatever, saith he, you owe my Master; own no more of the Debt but so much, and set down in your Bills so much, as paid to me his Steward, for his use; leave it to me to satisfy him how that part of the Debt which you pretend to have paid to me hath been disposed of, I will discharge you of it, and you and I will divide it between us, and we will live together merrily on it. Here's the Project resolv'd on, and possibly among many Tenants and Debtors, could hardly miscarry, but enough would be found ready enough to comply with him, and go shares with him in the Sin of Cozening their Lord, upon condition to share in the Gain too, and save a part of the Rents or Debts due to him in their own Purses.

This is usually the upshot and Conclusion of all the Sinners deliberation and consultation with himself, about what he is to do that he may live. As we commonly say, over Shooes, over Boots, He cares not how deep he wades, so that he can but catch what he Fishes for. Carelessness and wasting in his Office, the Steward resolves to mend no otherwise than by cheating when he's out of it. And here we may see the Mischief of accustoming one's self to any Sin. It is rarely left off, and as rarely goeth singly, and alone,
but

but draweth on more Sins after it. When one Devil hath open'd the Door, and is entertain'd, 'tis easy for a Legion to enter; and they are not very backward to enter, where the way is open.

And indeed of all other Sins, that of Profuseness and Wasting, a Habit of Spending, and living voluptuously and prodigally, cannot endure to be alone, nor will it take Leave, and be gone quickly. Sins of this kind are they which not only gratifie the sensual and carnal Man most of any, but which give the Repute of Gentiefolks, and of Persons of a gentile Humour, and good Breeding. And such gentile Sins cannot be maintain'd at a low Rate, they must have a multitude of other Sins to bring in Provision for them. Neither Digging nor Begging will serve to feed these devouring Sins. If by honest Labour, or the Hand of Charity, we can get a bare Livelyhood, enough for Nature, and to keep us alive, and in Health, 'tis well; but what shall we do to live like our Selves, to look great, to make some Figure above our Neighbours, at least, amongst the best of them to eat and drink, and wear as well as they, and to keep gentile Company, and to appear Some-body in the World. There must to uphold us in this Condition, be a Club of Sins, and not only of our own, but of others too, at work continually. We must entertain all that will come in Volunteers to join with us, and hire as many more as we can to assist, and all will be found little enough to supply him with what he can account sufficient, who hath always been used to have too much. A Steward that's content with his Salary, may indeed

deed live honestly, and Comfortably enough for an honest Man ; but how shall he do either to live vainly, and to keep in the Gentleman's Row, and feed all his Lusts? Or how shall he grow rich, and leave his Children Gentlemen after him, if he make not bold with his Master's Goods more than with his own Allowance? Neither wasting or thriving can be maintain'd by the scant Salary, or honest Industry, and faithful Service of a just Steward. Some other Tricks must be learn'd, and it's easy enough, at this Day, to find those who are very perfect and cunning at them; the Master's Negligence, and the Tenants or Debtors Dishonesty, are good helps to them. They have the Arts of thriving, by sucking from both, till they grow too great for both. And indeed whatever such Stewards deserve for the waste they make of what is not their own, such Lords and Tenants, well deserve to be thus drained for feeding such Leeches who will never leave sucking till they burst.

Wasting is still the thing that wicked Men resolve upon, and all they take into their Consideration is, which way of VVasting will serve their turn best, or will be easiest for them to make use of. Honest Labour we find will not bring in enough for our Appetites; what then, will not Stealing, or Robbing, or Cheating, over-reaching, and taking advantage of Ignorance or Credulity in Trading and Bargaining; will no such Arts as these serve us neither? If we be ashamed to beg, are we also ashamed to borrow what we either never intend, or cannot hope to be in a Condition to pay again? Or are we too modest to pay one with what we borrow of another, till

we

we make our last Creditor pay all? Some or other of these will be always accounted gentle shifts, and so long as they will keep us in the Mode and Garb of Gentlemen, few of us are ashamed of them, and especially of being borrowing Thieves. Tho' I think among all sorts of Thieves, there's none so mischievous a Thief as he, that thus steals by borrowing. The righteous and good natured Man is ever merciful and lendeth, and he is the worst of Thieves by whom such good and kind Men are the greatest Sufferers. The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again. *Psal. 37. 21.* Whereby we may understand either his Sin, or its Punishment, his Character of his Fate. He that useth this Trade is certainly a wicked Man; and he that is wicked, is often thus punished, by being reduced to so needy a Condition, as at once makes needful for him to borrow, and him unable to pay what he borroweth.

I shall say no more of this now, seeing it seems no way applicable to the Design of the Parable: Only thus much by way of Advice. Let us all learn to be Godly, and so shall we also learn to live soberly. Let us learn to live soberly, and that will make it very easy for us to live justly. Piety will make any one well contented with what will sustain Nature for the Service of God; and Nature is best kept in a fit Temper for God's Service with a little; and where a little is enough, there can be no Temptation to do unjustly.

Verse 8.

And the Lord commended the unjust Steward, because he had done wisely; for the children of this world are in their Generation wiser than the children of light.

Hitherto in this Parable, we have been entertained with a Story of a rich Lord, and his unjust Steward. We have heard how this wasteful Fellow abused his Lord's goodness to him, and was false to his Trust: What Displeasure his Lord conceived against him for his base and ungrateful Behaviour; how he call'd him to give up his Accounts, and discharged him from his Stewardship; and Lastly, what cunning Shifts and Fetches this Man had for himself, to be as little a Loser, as might be, by the Loss of his Place. We have now before us, in this Verse, two things to be consider'd.

1. The Judgment of his Lord, and his Commendation of him. *And the Lord, that is, his Master, commended the unjust Steward, because he had done wisely.*

2. The use that our Saviour makes of this his Judgment and Commendation. *For the Children of this World are in their Generation wiser than the Children of Light.*

1. Here is the Judgment of his Lord, and his Commendation of him. *And the Lord, by whom we are not to understand our blessed LORD and Saviour, who spake this Parable, but the Lord and Master of the Wicked Steward; he it was that commended the unjust Steward, not for his Injustice, he could not judge that a thing capable of any Commendation at all in any one; but for his Wit, because he had done wisely, and had very subtilly contrived for a future Livelyhood. He judged this a wise part, and he commended him for being so Wise for himself.*

Of this I shall now say very little, the Master was but a Man, and his Judgment is no Rule for others to Judge by; nor can his Commendation be any Warrant for us to commend such Wisdom as this Man shew'd. God judgeth not as Man judgeth; and the Wisdom of this World is Foolishness with God. 1 Cor. 3. 19.

Should the general Practice of the World, yea, or of that Part of it which is call'd *Christianity*, over-rule our Judgment; and were the Matter

to be determined by most Voices, the Master would here carry it, and his Judgment and Commendation would stand good, tho' contrary to the Judgment of God, and all good Men. He that hath Wit enough to contrive for himself all worldly Advantages, shall pass with the most for a very wise Man. The most of Men trouble not themselves much about Right or Wrong, Lawful and Unlawful, Honest and Dishonest; these they will them to talk of, (and 'tis too commonly no more but Talk) who are by their Profession to study Conscience, and Law; Casuists and Lawyers may wrangle with one another about these things, if they have a mind to it, but Men of other Callings and Professions have something else to mind. All they concern themselves about, is either what's profitable, or what's pleasant. And he is voted the wisest Man, that in spite of either Conscience or Law, can compass his Gain, or his Pleasure. He that's wise for this World is thought wise enough, let them be wise for the other World who love it, and are weary of this.

It is look'd upon but as a very cold Commendation, and such as seems to have something either of pity or Contempt in it, to call one no more, but a good honest Man. As much as to say, he hath not much Wit, he goeth drudging on in an honest Calling, and is contented with the moderate Fruit of his Labours, and doth no Body any hurt, nor himself much good; and so let him pass. Nay, tho' he be very charitable, and do much good with that Little, which God blesseth his Labour withal; and tho' he be very serviceable to his Country in the Place where

he liveth, and can advise well in any Business, and is always ready to contribute to the Welfare of the Neighbourhood; yet so long as he improvethe not his Estate, nor enricheth himself and his Children, how good and honest soever he be, he shall not be accounted a wise Man. Nothing but Wealth and Greatness can gain a Man so much Reputation in the World, as to be thought wise. How far are most of us, who are called Christians, from being of his Mind and Judgment concerning true Wisdom?

Indeed, I dare not say, that we most of us esteem every one wise who endeavour to thrive, grow Rich, or otherwise enjoy his own pleasure in the World. For tho' we generally approve of his Design, yet he may prosecute his Design so untowardly, that we cannot think him wise. We cannot think him wise that cannot contrive a way to grow Great, and not impoverish himself by paying too dear for his Honour; nor him, who cannot find a way to take his pleasure, without wasting his Estate; nor him that cannot by his cunning and dishonest Shifts and Tricks grow rich, without laying himself open to the Lash of the Law. To compass our worldly Ends any way, and be safe in the mean time is accounted Wisdom, and we account no one a Fool, but he that cannot play the Knave undiscover'd. To disguise one's dishonest Dealings handsomely, and under a Mask of Justice and Religion to go on in a thriving Way of Wickedness, this it is we generally cry up for Wisdom. We count him indeed the only Fool, whether we have confidence enough, or no, to say as much, that knows not how to be a Knave, that

is, to be cunningly and concealedly wicked, and him we esteem a wise Man, who can be a Knave, and not let the World know that he is so. If the Steward be so cunning as to Live on still by cheating his Lord, and his Lord never discover his Knavery, he is a wise Man. And because he took the hopefullest Way to do so, because he found out a way to get his Living, by making his Lord's Debtors for their own advantage as wicked as himself; and so they were put into that strait, that they should not know how to inform against him, but they must betray themselves; for this his Lord thought he had Reason to call him wise, and to commend his Policy.

How little do we generally regard the Wisdom which the blessed JESUS came to reach us, the Wisdom unto Salvation, which we learn in the holy Scriptures? If we can by all our Wisdom make any shift to get what we would have in this World, we think our selves wise enough for now and hereafter, and there will not be wanting many others that will esteem us so. We know we must die, and because of that we think we take the wisest Course to live after our Death so as we can, in the Memories of Men, we therefore scrape up an Estate, and build Houses, which may be visible Monuments of our Wisdom and Providence, and make them the talk of the World when we are gone. *Their inward Thought is, (saith the Psalmist) that their Houses shall continue for ever, and their Dwelling Places to all Generations; they call their Land after their own Names.* Psal. 49. 11. *This their way is their folly; yet their Posterity approve their Sayings.* v. 13. *Tho' he that became rich, whilst he lived blessed his Soul;*

and Men will praise thee when thou dost well to thy Self. Yet he shall go to the Generation of his Fathers, they shall never see Light. v. 18. 19. There is no Question to be made of it, but as long as we can live in Wealth and Pleasure, we shall have know to flatter us, and call us wise, but are we the better for this when we are once wrap'd up in darkness, and shall never see Light any more? But what praise this kind of worldly Wisdom deserves, we shall be the better able to discern, when we have considered the next thing observable in this Verse, *viz.*

2. The use that our blessed Saviour makes of this Judgment and Commendation which the Master bestows on the Unjust Steward, in these Words. — *For the Children of this World are in their Generation wiser than the Children of Light.* Here our Saviour begins, and in the next Verse he goeth on, to shew us what his design was to teach us by this Story of the rich Man and his Steward, which is this, that we should learn to be as wise and provident for a future and eternal Life, as worldly Men use to be for this short Life present. In this Verse he lets us know, to our shame, that we are not so; in the next he directs us how we may be so. The Judgment that he here in this Verse gives, when he saith the Men of this World are wiser, serves not at all to encourage them in that kind of Wisdom whereof they are Masters; but to shame us for being no wiser than we are. In his Words we are to take Notice. 1. Of the Description of the two sorts of Persons whose Wisdom he here compareth. The one he calls the *Children of this World,*

World, the other, *the Children of Light*. 2. The Judgment he gives concerning the Wisdom of these two sorts, the former is *wiser* than the latter.

3. The Qualification of this Judgment, or his Right Meaning in it explain'd, they are *wiser*, but 'tis only *in their Generation*. And for the right Understanding of this, we are to learn.

1. Who are they who are call'd the *Children of this World*, and who they are who are call'd the *Children of Light*. 2. What these words *in their Generation* signifie. These things understood, the Instructions here to be learn'd will lie open before us.

First, Who are they who are called the *Children of this World*? Eph. 1. 21. We read of *this World*, and *that which is to come*. These two are often mention'd together as two Opposites. In this World now we live, but there is another World wherein we hope to live when we go out of this. By this World we here understand the Life we here live, and the things pertaining to this Life, wherewith this World is furnished. And then the *Children of this World* are they whose whole Concern is about this present Life, and the Things of this present World; not much troubling themselves about the Life to come, or what is to be in the World to come.

Secondly, Who are the *Children of Light*? We read of God, that *He is Light*. 1. Joh. 1. 5. And the *Inheritance of the Saints in Light*. Col. 1. 10. And the Word of God is a *Light*. Psal. 119. And then the *Children of Light* are they, who being brought to the Knowledge of God by his

Word, and of the Inheritance which he hath provided for them that serve him in the other World; profess themselves to be his faithful Servants, and to make that Inheritance their chief aim, and to pursue it by such means as God prescribed in his Word.

Thirdly, What mean these Words, *in their Generation*? It is this, That it is only in their own way, in the Concerns of this World, which they make their Care and Business; in such Things they are wiser, but not in all Things. Our Saviour means not that the Children of this World are simply or absolutely wiser than the Children of Light, but in some Respects only, and so far, that in compassing their worldly and carnal Ends, they shew more Wisdom, than the Children of Light are wont to do, in order to the obtaining those much better Things which they pretend to aim at.

These three things thus briefly explained, let us now see what Instructions are given us by our Saviour in these words. And to prevent Mistakes, as much as may be, I shall as well show what we are not taught, as some may possibly imagine we are, as what we are taught. Take all in three Propositions.

1. Our Saviour doth not here affirm, That worldly Men are indeed truly wise. Nor deny that the Children of Light are wise.

2. He doth affirm, That worldly Men however, take a wiser course to attain to their worldly Ends, than the Children of Light do to attain to what they seek after.

3. He

3. He would by this persuade us for very shame, to take a wiser course in the prosecution of our great Design.

1. Our Saviour doth not here affirm, That worldly Men are indeed truly wise, nor deny that the Children of Light are so. No, the quite contrary to this is the truth which he teacheth us. That worldly Men, how wise soever they think themselves, or are esteem'd by others, are indeed Fools; and that Religious Men are the only wise Men, however they are accounted of in the World. *The fear of the LORD, that is Wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is Understanding.* Job. 28. 28. *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of Wisdom, and the Knowledge of the Holy is Understanding.* Prov. 9. 10. *Labour not to be rich* (saith the wise Man. Prov. 23. 4.) and he adds very properly, *Cease from thine own Wisdom.* Thou may'st think it great Wisdom, by all means, to get as much as thou canst of this VWorld, but it is not so, and therefore cease from it. *For wilt thou set thine Eyes upon that which is not? Canst thou think it Wisdom to Labour for that which is most uncertain, and thou canst not confidently promise thy self either to get or keep? Thou Fool* (saith our Saviour to the rich Man, who promised himself much pleasure and happiness in his Wealth,) *This Night shall thy Soul be required of thee, and then whose shall these things be? They that will be rich, fall into Temptation, and a Snare, and fall into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown Men in Destruction and Perdition.* 1 Tim. 9. 6. To make it plain, that the Children of this World

World are not here commended as wise Men, the Words themselves are enough, and we have that in them which should make all Wordlings tremble when they hear it. And that, whether we consider the Descriptions of these two sorts of Persons, or the Limitation of the Judgment Christ gives of their Wisdom, when they are compared the one with the other.

First. The Descriptions of these two sorts of Men, evidently shew, which is indeed wise, and which foolish. The one sort is called the Children of Light, the other as opposite to them, the Children of this World, that is, of Darkness. Now let us consider what these two Descriptions imply.

The Children of this World are so call'd, because they are in Love with this World, and conform themselves to this World, and think to make themselves happy in this World. And so shew plainly, That they are not the Children of God, nor the Children of another World which is to come. *If any Man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him. 1 Joh. 2. 15. For all that is in the World, the Lust of the Flesh, and the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life, (which are the things that worldly Persons love) is not of the Father, but is of the World. And if they be not the Children of God, then whose Children are they but the Devils? For so all Mankind stands divided, into the Children of God, and the Children of the Devil. 1. Joh. 3. 10. So that the worldly-minded Person having not chosen God for his Father whom he loveth, hath made himself a Child of the Devil? 'Tis he that tempts*
Men

Men to love and worship him, with the Kingdoms of this World, and the glory of them. *Matt. 4.* The Devil is the God of this World. *2 Cor. 4. 4.* that is, worldly Men make him their God, and live in Subjection to him. Hence 'tis easy to guess at his Wisdom, by the wise Choice he hath made of his God. And as the Children of this World are not the Children of God, so are they not the Children of the other World to come. For our Saviour hath told us, That the World to come is a Kingdom prepar'd to be inherited by the Blessed Children of his Father. *Matt. 25. 34.* The Men of the World have their Portion in this Life. *Psal. 17. 14.* Thus it befel the Rich Worldling and Voluptuous Epicure in that other Parable, which we read in this Chapter; he was a Child of this World, and Lazarus a Child of Light; therefore when they left this World, Lazarus only was carried into Abraham's Bosom, and the Rich Man went to Hell to be tormented in Flames. And Abraham bids him there remember his wise Choice. *See* remember, that thou in thy Life Time receivest thy good Things, and likewise Lazarus evil Things, but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. *v. 25.* The Inheritance is provided for them that love God, and not for his Enemies, such as are the Children of this World. For the Friendship of the World is Enmity with God. Whosoever therefore will be a Friend of the World, is the Enemy of God. *Jam. 4. 4.*

Again, the Children of this World stand here oppos'd to the Children of Light; whence it implicth, that they are the Children of Darkness. Having the Understanding darkned through the Ignorance that is in them. *Eph. 4. 18.* The God of this World

World blinding the Minds of them that believe not.
 2 Cor. 4. 4. *Walk they do in the Works of Dark-*
ness, making Provision for the Flesh to fulfil the Lusts
thereof. Rom. 13. 12. *Subject to the Rulers of*
the darkness of this World. Eph. 6. 12. And
 finally, are to be cast out into outer Darkness. Matt.
 25. 30. But now they, to whom they are op-
 pos'd, are the Children of the Lights, and the Chil-
 dren of the Day, they are not of the Night, nor of
 Darkness. 1. Thel. 5. 5. They are enlightned
 by the Word and Spirit of God, with the Know-
 ledge of saving Truth, of God the Father of
 Lights, and of his only Son JESUS Christ, the
 Light of the World, and this is Life Eternal, to
 know the only true God, and JESUS Christ
 whom he hath sent; so that howsoever any of
 them were once Darkness, yet now are they
 Light in the LORD. The Gospel especially,
 even the glorious Light of the Gospel of Christ,
 whereby he hath brought Life and Immortality to
 Light, hath shin'd unto them, and opened their
 Eyes, turning them from Darkness to Light,
 that they may be made meet to be partakers of
 the Inheritance of the Saints in Light. These
 Characters here given us by Christ of these two
 sorts of People shew abundantly, which of them
 he esteem'd Wise, and which Foolish.

Yet, will the same be made more clear by
 considering, Secondly, How he qualifies and li-
 mits the Judgment he gives concerning the
 Wisdom of the Children of the World. They
 are wiser (saith he) yet not altogether, nor in
 all things, no, not in the principal thing of all;
 but only in their Generation, in their own way,
 for this World only, and in the Management of
 their

their worldly Concerns, which is their whole Care and Business, and all that they desire to be wise for. They are not, neither desire they to be wise for Heaven, or unto Salvation. And so according to the common Proverb, they are Penny Wise, and Pound Foolish, about the perishing Trifles of this World very wise, but about the weighty concerns of Eternity more Foolish. *I will destroy (saith God) the wisdom of the Wise, and will bring to nothing the Understanding of the Prudent.* 1 Cor. 1. 19. *God taketh the Wise in their own Craftiness, and the LORD knoweth the thoughts of the Wise that they are vain.* 1 Cor. 3. 19, 20. The Wisdom of worldly Men is but a vain Wisdom, God frequently defeats it, and frustrates even the worldly designs of such wise Men to make them see their folly, and how little their Wisdom is worth. It is but a *Fleshy Wisdom.* 1 Cor. 1. 12. At the best, it only helps them to compass low and carnal Ends. A Wisdom, that is Earthly, Sensual, Devilish. *Jam. 3. 15.* For the things of the Earth, not of Heaven; for the things of the Body, not of the Soul; for the things which the Devil Tempers with, not wherewith God Rewards his Children. A wisdom that above all things keeps Men from being Good and Happy, therefore are these things which will make Men eternally happy, said to be hid from the Wise and Prudent, and Revealed unto Babes. *Matt. 11. 25.* And that not many wise Men after the Flesh, nor many mighty, nor many noble are call'd. 1. Cor. 1. 26. A wisdom it is that must be unlearn'd of every one that will become wise unto Salvation. *Let no Man deceive himself; if any Man among you seem-*

eth to be wise in this World, let him become a Fool, that he may be wise. 1 Cor. 3. 18.

Let us now conclude from these Promises, and we must confess, that the Children of this World, how wise soever they are in their Generation, are, in truth, not wise but foolish. For all comes to this in the Close, That they are very wise to undo themselves eternally; wise enough to compass and bring about those designs in this Life, which will be sure to end in eternal Destruction.

The business of Wisdom is to make choice of a right end, which attain'd, may make one most happy, in finding out proper means for the attaining to that end; and lastly, in so dexterously using those means, as that he may not miscarry in his design. Now, tho' the Children of this World may be wise both in finding out the proper means conducing to the end which they have resolv'd upon, and in a very cunning use of the same; yet fail they in the main point, that is, in the choice of a right End. An earthly imperfect, short kind of happiness they aim at, such as this World can afford them, and this too, tho' so mean, incomplete and transient, is so uncertain a thing, and, little in their power, that after all both their Wisdom and Diligence, they may, and very often do fail of it, and never are able to obtain it; whilst, on the other side, the Children of light have chosen an Heavenly, Perfect and Eternal Good, even *the Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away*, for the end they aim at; and are well assur'd in the diligent use of the proper means of obtaining it, they cannot fall short of it, for it is *reserv'd in Heaven*
for

for them. Undoubtedly therefore they are wise in their choice of a right End, wherein they may be perfectly and eternally happy. But the other, who have made a worldly Happiness their End and Choice, have, in this, sufficiently betray'd their folly, and then their wise Choice, and use of means to that End, must needs be their folly, too. For he is certainly a Fool that hath pitch'd upon an end which is not worth his labour, and not quit cost tho' one get it. And the more pains one takes in searching for the means of compassing such an end, and the more time and study he is at to use them successfully, the more he befools himself; he Robs himself of his ease and quiet, and cumbers both Head and Body with a great deal of Contrivance and Care, and wearisom drudgery for a thing, which, when he hath it, is but good for little, and must quickly be lost again, and it may be, never be got at all; one hour will certainly, within a while, leave him nothing of all that his Wisdom and Diligence have procured. *Thou Fool, so is he (saith our Saviour) who layeth up Treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God, Luke 12. 21.*

Our Saviour doth affirm, That worldly Men take a wiser course to attain to their worldly Ends, than the Children of light do to attain to the things they seek for. That those are wiser for this World, than these are for the World to come. For tho' they have fixed on a wrong end, yet they discover more wisdom (such as it is) in contriving and working for that end, than these do in labouring for one infinitely better.

This might be shewn very largely in all the several sorts of the Children of this World, the Voluptuous, the Ambitious, the Covetuous; these have several designs and ends which they pursue, and several ways they have of Prosecuting their several ends, yet all of them are the Children of this World; and 'tis easy to observe what cunning and subtile Arts each of them have to fetch about their several Designs, and become Masters of their wishes and desires, above what can be observ'd in the Children of Light, whose end, which they have propounded to themselves, is the happiness of the World to come. It shall suffice to Instance in a few particular Indications of this their Wisdom, leaving the rest to every Man's own Observation. Let us now only take notice of his Wisdom, first, about the End he aims at, and secondly, about the Means and Use of them.

First, His wisdom about the end thus shews its self, to be more than that which the Children of Light use about their's.

1. Whatever the thing be which they aim at as their chief end, they are very intent upon it. Having won their Affection, and so seated it self in the Heart, it also continually busieth their thoughts, so that whatever else they are doing it will come ever and anon into their Mind, and call it off from the work they have in Hand. In their very Sleep they Dream of it, at their Meals they talk of it as their best Sauce to their Meat, and in their Prayers (if they use any) whatever they say, this they most think upon.

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And were the thing worth all this, it were a wise course. For what one principally designs, like the mark he shoots at, should be always in his Eye. He that thinks but little on his main Business, followeth it but coldly, and for the most part ineffectually. And this is the too common fault of the Children of Light, too little to think and Meditate upon their main end, the Salvation of their Souls. They should herein more imitate the Children of this VWorld, and have Minds almost continually fix'd upon the Blessedness of Eternity; and whatever other Business they are intent upon, as they necessarily must be very often; yet, should God and Heaven, and the happiness they hope to enjoy with God and Heaven, have some of their thoughts, else whilst these are not thought, the most profitable works of their honest calling, may occasion their going out of their way to Blessedness. Whatever we do, we are to see that all be done to the Glory of God; and so it will not be done if God be seldom in our thoughts.

Neither do the Children of this World think only much of their worldly Ends, but they think of them very concernedly and Affectionately. They please themselves mightily in the thoughts of them, even at a distance, and amplify the delights and satisfactions, which they imagine they shall have in the full possession of the things they aim at, whether they be Wealth, Honours, or sensual Pleasures. They think of them as of the things, wherein alone they can hope to be happy, and whilst they are but seeking them, they make the greatest difficulties in
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their way more easy to them, by thinking how well they shall be paid for all their pains in the Enjoyment when it comes; and in the mean time they feed upon them, and as much as is possible, enjoy them in Contemplation. And, here again did the thing deserve it, they do wisely for to think of a thing but coldly, as they who are very indifferent about it, doth very little good. And this is a common fault of the Children of Light, that they meditate not on those excellent things they aim at so much, that they may win their best Affections, and for the love of them, and the unexpressible Joy and Happiness which they may promise themselves in the Enjoyments of them, make every hardship and troublesome piece of way they must go through, more easy, if not pleasant to them. They should have, with Moses, *respect unto the Recompence of Reward*, and think of it as a thing of that Concernment to them, that all seems nothing without it, as our blessed JESUS, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the shame. It is the want of this consideration, that the things we seek for are of so great Concernment to us, that if we attain not to them, we must be miserable for ever, that most of our miscarriages come from. We think of them too slightly, not endeavouring to Affect our Hearts thoroughly with a Sense of their worth.

3. The Children of this World resolve firmly on their Ends, and are so faithful and true to their purposes, that nothing can prevail with them to make a new choice; resolutely they go on through all dangers, and venture on every thing

thing in the way, and nothing can divert them. No reasons that are urg'd will be hearkned to, or dissuade from, carrying on the design they are Engag'd in. They will fight with Winds and Waves to get Wealth, go upon the Cannons Mouth to get Honour, venture on Rottenness and Pains, on Death in any shape, on the Gallows and Halter, to enjoy the pleasant things they love, and wade to their own Death and Damnation through the Blood of a Husband, or a Rival. Now on the same supposition still, that the thing they aim at were worth all this, and would well pay them for it; we must confess that they take a wise Course; for he that is not firmly resolv'd, whatever fall in the way, to go on as well as 'tis possible for him towards his end, will hardly ever compass it, because he cannot but meet with many Rubs and Discouragements, which would divert him from it, did not the strength of Resolution Master all. And here again the Children of Light fall short, they are not resolutely bent upon the end they aim at, and therefore every Temptation turns them out of their way, and they are set back again, and at a greater distance from it than before. Whereas a firm resolution to go through with their design, would make them disregard all Temptations to the contrary; and every Conquest they have got over any Temptation by a resolute Resistance, would make it more easy for them, and greatly encourage them to do the same again. Hereby they would feel their own which God hath given them, and would be asham'd to be baffled by what they have already found to be too weak to encounter a strong Resolution. But whilst,

for want of Resolution, and whilst we coldly and indifferently, and so feebly pursue what we desire, we are almost every day overcome by one Temptation or other, we begin to faint, and our Courage fails us, and we go heartlessly about our main concerns, beginning sometimes to doubt whether we shall ever get quite through all the rubs in our way, and sometimes sitting down in despair.

In these three things relating to the end, the Children of this World shew themselves wiser in their generation than the Children of Light.

Secondly, They are wiser too in their use of the means whereby their Ends are to be obtain'd. Indeed, as the Children of Light have the advantage of them in a right choice of the end; so have they also in the means, at least thus far, that they have all Instructions needful both for the right choice, and the right use of the best and most certain means; for when worldly Men have done their best, as they are left barely to the Directions of their own very fallible Judgments, or of others as fallible as themselves; so the means, how promising soever, and how wisely soever used, may never bring them to Fruition of their End; the Children of Light are directed to the most certain means of obtaining their End by the infallible Spirit of God in his Word, and these Means can never fail them in bringing them to a full Enjoyment of their End, but by their own Neglect of them, or of not using them according to the Directions which are given them by God.

Yet in the use of these Means they do not ordinarily, nay, it may be, the very best of them do never shew so much Wisdom, as the Men of this World do in the use of their's. I shall now endeavour to manifest this only in a few Things which are most obvious.

1. In the care taken to understand these means, and the true use of them. Worldly People make it their great Care, and study so to educate their Children, as to make them expert and ready in all such things, as may best fit and qualify them for the main thing which they would make their End. They spare no cost to give them such kind of Breeding as seems most proper, and they are always infusing into them such Principles, and labouring to bring them into so high an Opinion of the Calling for which they design them, as may bring them in Love with it, and move them to use all diligence imaginable. And then as they grow up, and begin to choose for themselves, they use all diligence to learn all the Mysteries of their Profession, consort themselves with those who are best seen in them, and from whom they may best learn them, and are not willing to come behind any one in their own way, but are ashamed and angry to be out-done by any Body. But now where shall we see all this Care amongst the Children of Light? Tho' they dedicate their Children to God so soon as they are born, as if they design'd Religion to be their main Business, and the Inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven, the chief End they aim'd at, and make them renounce the Service of the Devil, the World and the Flesh, that they may serve God only, yet

how late is it before they begin to instruct them in the Holy Profession they have chosen for them, and whatever else is taught, this is taught them very sparingly, and only by the by, at spare times a little, when they have nothing else to do. The Main is still to make them good Plowmen, or Cunning Tradefmen, or well-bred Gentlemen, or to furnish their Heads with such Learning as may fit them for some of the Learned Professions; and these things they endeavour to bring them in Love with, by such Motives and Arguments as are all drawn from the Things of this VVorld, which therefore they must first teach to love, and have an high Esteem for: They make them first fond of Honour and Greatness, or of Riches and Plenty, or of the Pleasures of a Gentleman's Life, and then they perswade them for the sake of these to undergo the Pains and Trouble of Learning. But how few labour first, to bring them in Love with God, and the Joys of Heaven, and the Excellency and Divine Pleasures of a vertuous and religious Life; and perswade them above all things to learn perfectly the Things of God, and the way of serving him. If they be at all instructed in these Things, it is only at some few odd times, and that which should be their main Business, and taught them before, and with all other Things, which it is fit to teach them, is only taught them now and then a little, as if it were the least Concernment of their Lives. How little Care do young People take, when they come to have some Understanding of the Obligations they are under to live Religiously, to improve themselves in the Knowledge and Practice of the Things belonging to it? We find here any pick-
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ing or choosing of such Persons for their Companions, as they may gain most Knowledge by, in this only necessary Profession, nor any Trouble of Mind or Shame to lay behind others, or to be outdone by them in the Exercise of Godliness and Vertue. Here's no Holy Emulation to go before others, and to be Examples to them, or Guides in the way to Life eternal. Nay, we are apt to think very well of our selves if we be not with the hindmost of all, or if we can see any worse Proficients than our selves. We have little Ambition to excel, or to go foremost in the way of Religion; and it may be too truly said of us, what we read. *Heb. 5. 10. When for the Time ye ought to be Teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first Principles of the Oracles of God.*

2. The Children of this World shew their Wisdom in contriving and projecting for themselves, and forecasting their Business, and drawing up before hand a Scheme, and Platform of it in their Thoughts. As they have their End, whatever it is, always in their Eye; so endeavour they to lay the whole way to it, as open and plain before them, as 'tis possible, and forethink what they have to do in every place, and in every season, and one shall rarely find them at a Loss what to do upon any Occasion, they are hardly ever at a stand, or have their Business to consider and to contrive when it should be done. One shall hardly meet with any dull, thick Scull'd Plowman, but he hath so contrived and methodized his Business before Hand, that he can at any time lay him down to take his necessary Rest, without troubling his Head, and breaking his Sleep

with thinking what he hath to do to morrow. He knows what Ground he is to break up, and what to lay down, and what's the fit Season for every part of his Work; and what Rent he is to provide for his Landlord against the Day, and by what means to make it up, and all his Affairs are so well timed, and every thing done in its Season, that he can without hindring of any necessary Business, enjoy the Opportunity of every Market and Fair, when the Day comes. And now how little of this Prudent Forecast and Contrivance is discernable among the Children of Light? How few of us have well weighed in our Minds the great Business that we have here to go through with, and to dispatch before we go out of this World; or forelaid all things so, as to be ready for every Duty in its proper Season, and to do as much good in the World as time and opportunity will admit; Alas, we most of us live *Extempore*, having all to contrive and consider of when it should have been done; and Death over-takes us ere we have thoroughly considered how we are to live, and we hardly think of any thing we have to do, till we can do nothing. We have hardly so much Wisdom as to forecast our Business so, that God may have one Day in seven for his solemn worship; or that he may have every day in our Family, a Morning and Evening Sacrifice of Prayer and Praise. So little shew we of our Wisdom in contriving our Business for a blessed Eternity.

3. The Men of this World are very vigilant, watching for all the Advantages they can possibly lay hold on to promote their Designs. And they
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are very quick sighted in spying out every thing that may be of any advantage to them. A good Purchase, or a Fair Booty, or Market for their Purpose shall not easily escape them, they are always lying in wait for the Prey, and will not let slip an Opportunity that is put into his Hand: How doth the Adulterer watch for a fit Opportunity of fulfilling his Lust? How doth the ambitious Person wait like a Slave at Court for Honour? What Harkening and Listening after the Death or Sickness of any one, who by leaving the World, may, we hope, make room for us to succeed in his Preferment? What observing is there of the Humours of such Men as may be Instruments of our Advancement, and what Flatteries or Briberies are used to make them our Friends? How ready are we in Bargaining or Trading to spy out either the necessity or ignorance of a Chapman, and to serve our selves of it? Thus in every thing do we shew our watchfulness about the Affairs of this Life? But in relation to the great Concerns of our Souls, and of another World, we are like Men asleep, and can hardly watch one Hour; we let the best opportunities slip away from us, and seem but very little concern'd for it.

4. The Children of this World are very circumspect, and wary in the management of their Affairs. As they are vigilant, and seldom sleep away a good Market; so are they, when they have their Eyes turning every way to discover any inconvenience, any Impediment that lieth in their way, and use a great deal of care and caution to shun every thing that may be any hinderance

hinderance to them, or make it more difficult to come by what they seek after. This is indeed a very necessary piece of Wisdom, which if one do not use, he may lose his Labour and his Hope, after he hath taken a great deal of Pains, and promised himself good success, and such Wisdom well becometh the Children of Light, who are warned to walk circumspectly, not as Fools, but as Wise. But how few see we so behave themselves, as if they had never heard of such a warning? The Men of the World will not be persuaded to sit Talking or Playing away the Time, when they think they may by that miss their Gain, their Preferment, their Pleasure, whatever it be. Nay, you can hardly persuade such an one to use a short Prayer in his Family, or spend an Hour in the publick Worship of God at Church, or now and then to sit down and read some small Portion of Scripture for his Instruction and Direction in his Duty, lest his Business should be thereby hinder'd; yea, tho' they be such as love Company, and delight to sit Tippling and prating in an Ale-house, yet one shall very hardly tempt them into that beloved place, when they go about the main Business that they have chosen for themselves; lest when they are once in, and engaged in Company, they should forget themselves, and stay too long, and so lose the Opportunity they were going to lay hold on. But the Children of Light are not half so cautious, but spend a great deal of their time very vainly, which well improved, might have brought them in great Advantages. They are easily tempted to waste those precious Hours in idle Chat, and Impertinent Visits, and Childish Sports and Recreations.

Recreations, which should have been bestow'd in the enriching of their Souls. They too little consider the Dangers they are in, and therefore too daringly venture upon the Temptations which they cannot be sure to conquer; and so for want of due Circumspection and Caution are set behind Hand in their great Business, and are often at so great a Loss, that they know not which way to turn them. They cast themselves into perplexing Fears and Doubts, that they quite lost the Day of Grace, and shall never again get into the Way to Heaven; and indeed cannot get into it again, or revive their Dying Hopes, without very much difficulty, and bitterness of Soul.

5. How industrious and diligent are the Children of this World, in all their Worldly Concerns which they have once set their Hearts upon? What Pains and Drudgeries do they with most admirable Patience and Alacrity undergo, toiling Night and Day when there is Occasion for it, Wet and Dry, in Heat and in Cold, at Home and Abroad, in Winter and Summer, by Land and by Sea, above Ground, and in the Bowels of the Earth? What costs are they at? What a number of Servants and Factors do they employ? Nothing seems too much, or too hard, or too mean, or too tiresome to them, in order to the obtaining their Beloved Ends. But where is one half of this Pains and Industry visible among the Children of Light? How faintly and lingeringly, and lazily go they about the great Affairs of their Souls? How quickly do they grow tired, and weary in their way to heaven and eternal blessedness? One day in a Week, yea, a few Hours of
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that day tires them, if they be held to their work in earnest, and must be allow'd no Diversion. We are all for an easy and a cheap Religion; and are desirous to serve God, and to provide for our Souls indeed, but we would do it without much cost and trouble. We must do as little as we can for Heaven, only we would not willingly miss of it, and therefore we seem to do all rather of necessity than choice, and tho' things we do must be done, and we dare not do otherwise; yet they seem a Burthen, and are grievous, and we do them irksomly and heavily.

6. Again, the Children of this World are so much in earnest to compass what they aim at, that they will venture the loss of every thing for it, they'll set all at Stake, even Life it self for the winning what they have a mind to. This was touch'd on before, and therefore I say no more of it; but that we cannot ordinarily find the Children of Light so ready to venture the loss of any thing for the good of their Souls, and the Enjoyment of God in Heaven, as we find worldly Men are for any petty Trifle which their Affections are set upon.

7. When they meet with any considerable difficulty in their business, and apprehend some danger of miscarrying, the Children of the World are not willing to trust only to their own Wit and Conduct, but are very careful to have the best Advice and Directions they can possibly get. They consult their Experienc'd Neighbours, and all others of whose Skill and Judgment they have any Opinion. How little of this care do we find
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among the Children of Light? As tho' the eternal concerns of their Souls did not either need it, or deserve it; they seem mightily unconcern'd to be well advis'd in the Prosecution of them. How little use do Men ordinarily make of those Spiritual Guides, whom God hath set over them to counsel and direct them? Are these consulted as often about our spiritual and eternal concerns, as the Lawyer is about our worldly, or the Physician about our bodily? What little use do we make of our pious and wise Neighbours, that we may gain wisdom by their Experience? Nay, it is well, if we will be at the pains to consult the Bible, the Book of God upon any Occasion. And when we do so, what care take we to understand what we read in it? How seldom ask we any Questions about the meaning of it, or desire any help for the right use and application of any thing that we meet with in it? As if Heaven lay open before us, and we could not possibly mistake in the way to it, we are altogether secure, and trust to our own Judgments in every thing; or rather indeed to the way we are in, whatever it be, never troubling our selves to consider and Judge of it, whether it be right or wrong. We have been put into this way by our Friends, and it is the beaten Road, or that they go in, of whose Judgment we have got a good Opinion, and on which we are resolved to without giving our selves the trouble of advising about it.

8. *Lastly*, The Children of this World often take an Account of their present state, and examine how they stand in the World, what they have

have gain'd, or what they have lost. To this end they are very exact in the keeping of their Books, and their Notes; and observe how successful or or unsuccessful they are in the Courses they have hitherto taken, and whether they are to hold on in the same course still, or are to alter their Methods and Measures. But here again the Children of Light fall short of them. How rarely do they examine themselves, and take any Account of their Spiritual State. How many days let they pass away, without observing and noting down the Occurrences thereof; that they may know what they have gained, or lost in any of them? How few of us seem to take this care to keep all Reckonings straight in the Books of our Consciences between God and us? Neither our Receipts from him, nor our idle Expences, and wasting of his Goods; neither the mercies we are to thank him for, nor the Debts of Duty, which we owe him, and are in Arrear for, nor the Sins which we have committed, and are to be repented of, are so carefully observed, or so fully considered, as they ought to be. And we so seldom enquire into our selves, that even to attempt it, confounds us, and we know not how to go about it. Instead of many more Instances wherein that which is call'd the Wisdom of worldly Men discovereth it self, these are enow to shew them to be wiser in their Generation than the Children of Light.

If we be desirous to know how this cometh to pass, or what is the Reason why the Children of Light should not behave themselves as wisely in the ways they have chosen to walk in; as the Children

Children of this World do in their's, it is easy enough to understand it; when we consider the present state and condition that all Mankind is now in. Indeed, the Children of this World and of Light are not the very same state, for the one are in an unregenerate state, the state of corrupt Nature; but the other are in a state of Grace, the one are in the broad way that leads to Destruction, and the other in the narrow way that leads to Life eternal; yet notwithstanding this, we are all in a state of Imperfection and Weakness; we are yet in the Body, and in this World, and in the Company of the Wicked; and have much worldly Business to do, and many Temptations to overcome, and many evil Spirits troubling us. And when all this, and a great deal more which might be said is well consider'd, it cannot seem strange that the Men of the World should appear wiser in their way, than the Children of Light do in their's. For they appear to be wisest, who so manage their Business, that with the fewest Miscarriages and Disappointments in the way, they compass their Ends, and bring about their Designs, and it is a great deal more easy for worldly Men to do this, than it is for the Children of Light.

The Children of this World being born of the Flesh only, and not born again of the Spirit are Flesh, only Flesh. *Job. 3. 6.* Carnally minded, *Rom. 8. 6.* And sown to the Flesh only. *Gal. 6. 8.* And have but one Interest to serve, that of the Flesh. All their Contrivance and Labour is to make Provision for the Flesh to fulfil the Lusts thereof. But that which is born of the Spirit,

as the Children of the Light are, is Spirit, but yet so Spirit, as that this Spirit still dwelleth in Flesh, and this Flesh lusteth against the Spirit. Gal. 5: 17. So that it is plain, that the one, that is, the Children of this World have nothing but the Flesh to serve, and this they make their only Business, but the other, that is, the Children of Light, have both Spirit and Flesh to provide for, so long as they continue in the Flesh. And tho' the Spirit be their principal Care, yet the Flesh, as it signifies the Body, must not be neglected. As long as we are here in this World, we must serve God in the Body, and must take some care of our Flesh, and make some Provision for it, that we may be able to serve God in it. Now 'tis much easier for any one to manage one Business wisely when he hath no more to trouble his Head about, than wisely to carry on many Businesses at once, each whereof requires its proper Times and Seasons, and is to be done in another way and method, by other means, and with another Frame of Mind, and Earnestness of Affection and Endeavour. And this is the Case of the Worldling, and the Child of Light, the former hath but one great Design to drive on, and the latter, tho' they have with *Mary* chosen the one thing necessary for his principal End, yet must he with *Martha* be troubled about many things in his way to it, which makes it more difficult to him to do all Things wisely. Especially when 'tis yet further consider'd.

2. That as the Business of the Child of this World is but one, so 'tis that wherein he meets with least opposition, he can carry it on smoothly

ly with much Disturbance either from within
 or without him, nay he hath all the Encou-
 ragements and Advantages that he can wish for,
 and sails continually both with Wind and Tide.
 Whilst the Child of Light, as he must necessarily
 be troubled in this World with many other Bu-
 sineses besides that which he principally Labours
 in; so also doth he meet with many obstructi-
 ons and difficulties, and is almost always distur-
 bed and interrupted by one thing or other, and
 indeed is forced to row all the way to Heaven a-
 gainst the Stream, and in a very dangerous Chan-
 nel, and is often very hard put to it to make his
 way. The Children of this World are already
 in this World, and naturally have a great kind-
 ness for it, they see it, and taste it, and grow
 daily more in Love with the Beauty and Sweet-
 ness of it; their natural Inclination and sensual
 Appetite sharpened by every Taste they have had
 of Sweetness and Delight, makes them in good
 earnest set their Wits and Hands on work for it.
 But the Children of Light, and of the other
 World, are yet out of that World, and by the
 Light they have they see it at a great distance,
 and imperfectly, and cannot yet discern all the
 Beauty, nor taste all the Sweetness of it. Their
 natural Inclinations too are another way, and as
 more Men they have no Love for the Things they
 seek after, and those very things which make it
 so hard for Men to be wise for this World, make
 it hard for them to be wise for the other; that is,
 their natural Inclinations, and sensual Appetites.
 These give Life to the Worldlings Endeavours,
 but must be mortified by the Child of Light, if
 he will do wisely for himself. Again, the Chil-
 dren of this World doing the Works of the

Devil, are always sure of his Counsel and Directions, and that cunning Serpent that beguiled Eve through his Subtillty, is always ready to enter into them as he did into *Adam*, and to put into their Hearts what he would have them to do, and they must needs abound in that Wisdom which is sensual and Devillish, when they have the Devil himself for their Teacher in the things which they naturally love and desire to be wise about. And then they have all the Encouragement and Countenance, that the Example of Worldly and Carnal Men can give them, and they are by far the greater part of Mankind. 'Tis the Wisdom of this World they are wise in, and they have all the World to teach them, and can no where want expert Instructors. It is a fashionable Wisdom they have to learn, and they have not the Bars of Modesty or Shame to break through. They have nothing to do with God nor his Laws, and are not troubled with Disputes about Lawful or Unlawful, what's Pleading or Displeasing to him. But now the far other-wise with the Children of Light, whose Wisdom is that which is from above, and in the first place must be pure. They have, indeed, the Spirit of God to instruct them, and the Law of God to be a Light unto them, but when they have a Flesh warring against the Spirit, and a Law in their Members. *Rom. vii. 23.* Warring against the Law of their Minds when most enlightened; and the Wisdom they should learn is against the things they naturally love; yea, against all that the World calls Wisdom, and they have the Examples and Traditions, yea, Reproach and Derision of the World, and consequently the Bands of natural Modesty and

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standers to struggle through. They are to con-
 sider in every thing what is the Will of God,
 and what is lawful, yea, and Expedient too.
 And all these good difficulties which the wisdom
 of this World is not attended with. And there
 is it much easier for the Children of this World
 to be ill-wise in the Prosecution of their earthly
 Designs, than it is for the Children of Light.
 Yet, after all, our blessed Saviour would, by
 telling us this, persuade us for very shame to
 give wisdom in the Prosecution of our great de-
 signs. And, indeed, whatever Advantages the
 Children of this World have of us to be wiser
 in their Generation, or in their worldly con-
 cerns, yet, is it a very great shame for those who
 profess themselves to be the Children of Light
 to be no wiser in promoting their Spiritual and
 Eternal Designs, than they generally show them-
 selves to be. *Not to enlarge here, as we might easily do,*
it will be enough to shew how much we ought to
be ashamed of this, upon this threefold Considera-
tion. First, of the inestimable value of the
things we aim at. Secondly, of the Plenty and
Fitness of the means afforded us for the obtain-
ing of it. Thirdly, of the Evils which must fol-
low our Foolishness, either in neglecting or not
wisely enough prosecuting our end by those
means.

First, consider the inestimable value of the
 things we aim at. Such, and so great, that Eye
 hath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor hath it enter'd
 into the Heart of Man to conceive the Excellency
 of it. Such a thing is prepar'd, however, by
 God for them that love him, as that all that is
 in this lower World, which the Children of this

World with so much greediness hunt after, could any one Man be fully possess'd of it all, would be just nothing in Comparison of it. In the excellency of its nature it is most glorious, therefore call'd a Crown, and a Kingdom: Yea, 'tis the Fruition of God himself in Glory, and it is therefore sufficient, and will afford a full satisfaction of mind to every one who possesseth it, which is all that can be meant by Happiness. It answereth to all the Needs and Desires of a rational Creature, do is the fulness and perfection of our Nature, and exerciseth all the Faculties and Powers of the Soule in the most delightful and ravishing Employments. And finally, it lasts for ever, his everlasting Life, we shall ever be with the Lord, at whose right is the fulness of Joy, and pleasures for evermore. Is it not then a shamefull thing for us, who look for this blessed hope to be remiss and negligent in our pursuits of it? Ought we not to blush when we see the Men of this World so busy and industrious, watchful and circumspect, hot and zealous in their low earthly concerns; whilst we are so cold and lazy, and even listless in matters of infinitely more weight and worth? They do it to obtain a Corruptible Crown, but we an Incorruptible. 1 Cor. 9. 25. They Labour for the things which perish, for the World passeth away, and the Lust thereof. We Labour for an Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us. 1 Pet. 1. 4. A far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory. 1 Cor. 13. 17. A Kingdom which cannot be moved. Heb. 12. 28. gains as much as it is. Secondly, Consider the plenty and fitness of the means afforded us. Such they are, as if we show

rightly

rightly use them will certainly prove successful; and so many they are, that there is no good purpose which may not be effectually accomplish'd by them. Means of this Nature and Vertue the World hath none, nor can any one, whatever means he use, or what wisdom soever he exerciseth in the use of them, assure himself that he shall obtain his worldly ends by them. Our means are not of our own Invention, but of God's Prescription. He himself is our Teacher, we are taught of God. . . . We are not left to the Conduct of our own reason only, nor to be rul'd by its probable Conjectures; but the wisdom of God, the eternal word, is become the light of the World. His Institutions are the principal means we are to use. And he hath given us his Holy Spirit to guide us into all Truth, and to help our Infirmities, and assist us in the use of these means. We have our Rule and Directory in our Hand, the Holy Scripture given by Inspiration of God, to make us perfect unto every good work, and wise unto Salvation. And is it not a shame for us to be less diligent and industrious in the use of these excellent means, on the Conscientious use whereof is entail'd the blessing of God, and all good success; than the Children of the World are in the use of means, which, when they have done all they can, may prove unsuccessful?

Thirdly, Consider the evils which must follow our foolishness, either in neglecting, or not wisely enough using those means. We thereby provoke God to be displeas'd with us, we weaken our own hopes and comforts, we scandalize the weak, we discredit our Holy Religion, we make our Repentance difficult, Death terrible, and life eternal uncertain.

God expects a Duty from us answerable to the benefits we receive from him, and to whom more is given, of him more will, in all reason, be requir'd. If we make not good use of what we have, and do not wisely approve the Talent bestow'd upon us, we are in danger of having it taken from us. We ought to fear the woe against *Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum*. God cannot see his Mercy abus'd or slighted without Indignation. And by our neglecting to make a good use of it, we provoke him to awake us, and make us sensible of our folly by some very severe Chastisement; for this cause (as it was with the *Corinthians*) many amongst us are weak and sickly, and many die. And is it no shame, that who have receiv'd so many excellent tokens of God's love, should thus provoke him to Anger?

Our hopes are ground'd on the gracious promises of God, and these promises are made to such as are careful, diligent, and industrious in the use of the means which he hath appointed for the obtaining of what he hath promised; and our Comforts arise from Testimony of our Consciences, that our Conversation is as becometh the Gospel of Christ. Our hopes therefore and our comforts must needs encrease or abate, according as our care and diligence in the use of those means is more or less. Yea, Experience assures us, that many have by their Negligence in the use of the Means of Grace brought themselves into a despairing condition, wherein their Souls have refused to be comforted.

Our remissness in our Duty, and bold venturing upon Temptations, is too often a Scandal and Stumbling Block in the way of the Weak, who

who, tho' they design well, are yet very apt to be led by Example, and to take the Lives and Practices of those whose Wisdom and Piety they have a good Opinion of, for a good comment on the Rules which are given them by God in his Word. They think that they do well enough so long as they make as good use of God's Mercy, as they see others do, whom they think to be good Men. Thus not by our Knowledge (as the Apostle saith, 1. Cor. 8. 12.) but by our Folly and regardlessness of our own greatest Concerns, our weak Brother may be brought into danger of perishing, for whom Christ died.

Again, Hereby we also encourage the Adversaries of our holy Religion to speak evil of it, and bring it still more and more into discredit among them, who have not kindness for it. Many of them will not give themselves the trouble of studying and considering it in the Doctrines and Rules of it given us in the Holy Scripture, nor do they read it any where but in the Lives of those who profess it; and how should they think that we our selves believe it, when they see us less careful to assure to our selves the things it promisseth, by the means which it commends unto us, than the Children of this World are so make sure to themselves things no way comparable to those we pretend to hope for.

Moreover, by this Folly of ours, we make our Repentance a great deal more difficult, without which we know that we cannot be sav'd. Through want of Care, Caution, and Watchfulness, we are drawn into many Sins which we might have avoided, and so the number of our Sins to be repented of, daily encreaseth; and hereupon also many Sins pass unobserved by us,

and so we cannot worthily repent of them! Yea, by a careless and slight performance of Duty, we cheat our selves, and grow by degrees confident that we are in a very good Condition, and stand not in need of that Repentance which is our Duty. And thus we are hardly persuaded to believe that we have much to repent of, and when we are convinced of this, we are the more confounded in our Thoughts about it.

And this makes the very Thoughts of dying terrible to us, because we know that to die without true Repentance is to perish everlastingly, and reflecting on our past Behaviour, we are apt to fall into, many doubt about the truth and sincerity of our Repentance, and whether or no such as it is, it will be accepted of by God. Hence Fears arise, that we shall never attain to eternal Life. All these things well considered, it appears how much Reason we have to be ashamed of it, that we should be less provident and careful for the attaining to our selves eternal Blessedness, than others are for mere Trifles in comparison of that. Seeing therefore Death is at Hand, and we know not how soon we shall be called to give an Account of our Stewardship, let us give all Diligence to make our Calling and Election sure; that so an entrance may be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

VERSE

Moreover, by this Follow of our LORD, we are enabled to attain a great deal more difficult without which we know that we cannot be saved. Through want of Care, Caution, and Watchfulness, we are drawn into many sins which we ought to have avoided, and so the number of our sins to be repented of, daily encreaseth; and upon also many sins unpoleved by us.

Verse 9.

And I say unto you, make to your selves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

FROM the eighth Verse we learn'd, that the Children of Light are not so wise in ordering their Affairs in relation to a blessed Eternity, as the Children of this World are in their Worldly Concerns. Now in this Verse, our blessed JESUS teacheth us how we may be wiser, or which is the wisest course we can take for our own future Happiness, and it is this. Whatever we have by God's Gift, so to use it, as to make it as serviceable as it can be made, for the achieving our great and ultimate End, the Salvation of our Souls. Here we have his application of the Parable to his Disciples. *And I say unto you,* that is, what I have said all this while unto you in this Parable, is this, which I now tell you very plainly. This was my meaning in it, That seeing whatever you have is of God, and you have it as his Stewards, and are therefore to order and dispose of it, not as your Lusts would persuade you to do, but according to his will and Pleasure, which is to do every thing to his glory; and it being his will, that you should improve every thing to your own best advantage and profit, see that you do so; for you will die shortly, and this Stewardship will be at an end, and you must account for whatever you have had; and if you have

have not thus wisely Husbanded all Things, so that they may do you good hereafter, when you shall be turn'd out of all ~~here~~, you will be in a very miserable condition. Therefore, Make to to your selves, &c.

~~Mammon~~ is a ~~synical~~ word signifying Gain or Riches, and is observed to be used sometimes for the Idol which some Heathens worshipped as the God of Riches. To which use of the word our Saviour seems to have Respect. *Mat. 6. 24.* saying, *No Man can serve two Masters. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.* By shewing what use he would have us make of our Riches, he sheweth us also how to use all the other things which here we enjoy.

Riches are called the Mammon of unrighteousness, or the unrighteous Mammon, either first, because they are too often gotten or improved by unrighteousness; or Secondly, because they are as often made the Instruments of unrighteousness. An Instance of both in one, may be what is common enough, the bribing of Men in power to do Injustice; and such an Instance is that of the unjust Steward in the Parable, emulating his Lord's Debtors with his Lord's Money. Or fourthly, they both tempt and help Men to do wickedly, whence the Love of Money is called the Root of all Evil. *1 Tim. 6. 10.* Or lastly, which seems most probable, because in comparison of Spiritual and Heavenly Things, they are false and vain, and because of that unrighteous and wicked Men have often the greatest share of them, which could not be were they indeed the true Riches. And thus the ~~unrighteous~~ Mammon is used in opposition to the true Riches in the same Verse. *If therefore ye have not been faithful*

in the *unrighteous Mammon*, that is, in the things of this World; they are but false and deceitful, very certain things, uncertain Riches as they are called. 1 Tim. 6. 15. *Who will commit to your Trust the true Riches?* That is, those Spiritual Gifts, which make the possessors of them good and blessed, making them rich towards God, and happy for ever.

What more in the Words needs to be explained, it shall be done as there is occasion for it. Now we observe in them, for our Instruction, divers things, which we shall not now speak largely of, neither need we, seeing they cannot be called in Question by any one. They shall be therefore little more than mentioned, and only the main thing here intended a little more largely insisted on.

1. Observe, that Worldly Riches are here called the *Mammon of unrighteousness*, or the *unrighteous Mammon*. Men indeed, are too generally apt to idolize them, and to offer up not only their Time, their Strength, their Quier, but their Conscience and Religion, all Honesty and Justice, their Neighbours Rights, and the publick Good, and even their own Souls unto them. Therefore is Covetousness called *Idolatry*. Col. 3. 5. But our Blessed Saviour here teacheth us how little we ought to esteem them; for they are indeed no better, but the *unrighteous Mammon*. They are not so called, either because they are always unrighteously gotten, or because they always make or witness the Owners of them to be unrighteous Persons, or because one cannot be rich and righteous too. For many have been at once very rich, and very just and good, and have both gotten, and increased their Wealth by righteous ways,

ways, and done abundance of good, and wrought much righteousness with them in the World. But for some of these Reasons doth our Saviour thus call them. Either,

First, Because they are too often got, and improved by unrighteousness: a thing so common, that it hath occasioned a Proverbial Saying, That a rich Man is either an unjust Man, or an unjust Man's Heir. And Solomon hath this among his Proverbs, *He that maketh haste to be Rich shall not be Innocent*, Prov. 18. 20. This should mightily lessen the value of Riches in our Esteem of Things, that they may be often, and possibly it may be truly said, are for the most part gotten by such Arts and Means as are displeasing to God; and therefore cannot be reckoned among the best things, seeing God useth not to crown unrighteous doings, with his best Gifts. But such mean things are Riches in God's Account, that he seems to call them out for the wicked of the World to scramble for, and let's them take most of them that can by any means get them, so that the Tabernacles of the Robbers prosper, and they that provide God are secure, into whose hands God bringeth abundantly, Job. 12. 6. O,

Secondly, Because they very often are the instruments, and always are strong temptations to unrighteousness. They help Men to act a great deal of Wickedness, which without them, how much soever inclined unto it, they could not act, and by them Men are tempted to do the evils, which had they not been rich, they might probably never have thought of. The secondness of Riches makes the Work of God, which would make us fruitful in good acts, Mat. 13. 22. And they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a

Snare,

Share, *And into many foolish and brutish Lusts*, a Tim 6. 9. *Wherefore our Saviour hath said, that tho' it be not a thing impossible with God, who can give grace sufficient to use Riches well, yet it is, in a very hard thing for a Rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Mat. 19. 23. And this again should abate our eager desire of them; and make us regard them as things which are more to be feared than desired. *And*

Thirdly, Because they are but at best uncertain things, and of short continuance and profit; but are rich in comparison of the Treasures of righteousness, the true and permanent Riches, which will never fail us. *Wilt thou see things that pass away, that which is not? For Riches perish, and make themselves wings, they fly away as an Eagle towards Heaven.* Prov. 23. 5. No Man can be sure to get them, none can be sure to keep them when he hath got them. And this is enough to teach us how to prize them, even as perishing Things. Therefore if Riches encrease, 'tis a madness to set our Hearts upon them, nor to trust in them, seeing we never have any sure hold of them.

Observe, That our blessed Saviour saying, *that when they fail, would have us to conclude upon it, That fail we must, sooner or later, that is, one time or other we must forsake and take our last Leave of all our Earthly Enjoyments, when we can make no more use of them, nor will be any longer, as they have been serviceable to us. If we be not deprived of all our Wealth before we die, yet when Death comes, we must leave all behind us.* *We brought nothing into this World, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.* Jam. 1. 17. *As we came forth of our Mother a Worm, naked shall we return thence as we came, And shall take nothing of our*

our Labours, which we may enjoy during our *Hand*
Estate. Just. As we may be deprived of them
 before we come most to need them; so that they
 should continue with us as long as we live; yet
 may we outlive the use of them, we may be sick,
 and in such a condition, as we can reap no good
 of all that we possess. How often shall one be made
 rich, and the glory of his house increased; but when
 he dieth, he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall
 not descend after him. Psal. 49. 17.

This we all know well enough, howsoever we
 are affected with it. And truly, when this is
 well thought on, one would think it should have
 this effect upon us.

First, To hate that Pride which we are too
 apt to take in our Wealth. If we be rich, we
 expect that our poorer Neighbours should ad-
 dore, and idolize us, as much as we do our Ri-
 ches. And they must call us their betters,
 tho' for no other reason, but that we are sunk
 deeper into the Mire, or have a greater Load of
 thick Clay upon our Shoulders than they have.
 And all the World must honour and respect us;
 tho' all the good we do in it is to draw away the
 Nourishment it affords from those who would
 make better use of it. But a time is coming,
 when we shall have as little of it as they who
 have least; we shall be a *Generation* of vani-
 taters, as well as the meanest Begger, and shall ne-
 ver see *Light*. Psal. 49. 19.

Secondly, To cool our ardent desire of growing
 rich. For why should we so eagerly hunt after
 that, which when found, must so quickly be lost
 again? It must needs be a great Folly in any one
 impatiently to thirst after that, which he knows
 not whether he may live another Day to enjoy.

Let

Let us therefore, *having Food and Raiment be therewith content.* 1 Tim. 6. 8.

Thirdly, To make us restless to seek after something that may endure, even durable Riches and Righteousness. *Prov. 8. 18. Let us seek first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, and for Worldly Riches let our Hearts at rest, having this sure Promise, that they shall be added unto us, so far forth as our Heavenly Father seeth them needful for us. Mat. 6. 33.* **E H T**

3. Observe, That our blessed Saviour directing us so to use our Riches, as that we may be received when we fall into everlasting Habitations, assures us that such Habitations are provided for Men to go into when they die. *We know (saith the Apostle) that if our Earthly House of this Tabernacle were dissolved, we have a Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens. 2 Cor. 5. 1. In my Father's House (saith Christ) are many Mansions. Joh. 14. 2.* These are the Habitations we should as long as we live in this World be seeking for. *Here have we no continuing City, but we seek for one to come. Heb. 13. 14.* This is God's admirable goodness, and this should be our great comfort and reviving. **E H T**

There, First, are Habitations, Home-Steads, here we have no more but a time of sojourning. 1 Pet. 1. 17. *I am a Sojourner (saith the Psalmist) as all my Fathers were. Psal. 39. 12.*

THE

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content. 1 Tim. 6. 8.
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TH

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PARABLE

For as the Rich Habitations are a promise
for them that are in the Kingdom of God, and
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of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the
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Ten VIRGINS

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1 Pet. 1. 17. I was a sojourner (saith the Psalmist)
as all my Fathers were. Psal. 39. 12.

TH

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN Virgins.

Matth. XXV. 1.

Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened to Ten Virgins, which took their Lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom.

THESE Words begin a Parable, the main scope and Design whereof is, as appears v. 13. to persuade us unto a constant watchfulness over our selves, and to be so careful to keep our selves in a right Christian Temper, that whatever may happen, or how sudden soever any evil may befall us, or God may call us out of this world by Death, we may not be surpriz'd, or taken unprepar'd. To make us more sensible, he doth, as it were, tell us a Story, which it will be very necessary for us to apply unto our selves, as it is his meaning we should do. It is then as if he had said thus. There were two Persons to be married, and the Marriage was to be solemnly kept with Joy and Feasting. Therefore according to the Custom of the Place, ten Virgins were invited to be Bride-

Maids, whose Office it was to be ready with the Bride, when News was brought of the Bridegroom's coming, to go forth with Torches, or lighted Lamps to meet him, and conduct him into the Bride's Lodging, which was done in the Night. Now the Bridegroom not coming so early as he was expected, they all fell asleep, and some of the Virgins not being so provident, as to bring Oil enough to keep their Lamps burning so long, they went out whilst they slept. About Midnight, a time of Night wherein they least of all expected him, sudden notice was given, that the Bridegroom appeared, and all the Virgins were hastily called up to meet him. They whose Lamps were burning presently went forth to do so, but the rest were at a Loss, and knew not which way to turn them. Their Lamps wanted Oil, and none could they get, and whilst they ran to buy, the Bridegroom with the Virgins which met him, entered in to Celebrate the Marriage; and the other Virgins coming too late, were shut out, and could not by any Intreaty prevail to be admitted, or so much as taken notice of by the Bridegroom as any way related to him. And thus for want of timely forecast and care, they lost for ever the Bridegroom's Favour, their Share in the Marriage Feast, and all the Honour and Joy which they hoped for. The application of this Story is briefly this. Thus it will happen to us all one time or other. As many of us as take care to live in a continual Preparation, as our blessed Jesus hath in his Gospel taught us, for Death and Judgment shall by him be admitted into the everlasting Joys of Heaven; but they who through Negligence or Laziness, or any other way, are diverted from this constant care,

and

and are not always prepared to die, are in great danger to be surprized, and caught unprepared; which if they be, they are disappointed of all their hope, disowned by their Saviour, and must be for ever miserable. Thus I have briefly laid the general and main Design of this Parable open before you, and we are taught by it (as we desire to be eternally happy, and would not lose the Benefit of a Saviour) to live in an hourly expectation of Death, and so to order our whole Conversation in the World, that whenever we shall be called out of it, and how suddenly soever Death, or any other Calamity before Death may come upon us, we may never be unprovided to welcome it as a Messenger of Christ, the Bridegroom of his Church, nor be in any danger of being disowned by him, or excluded from that everlasting Blessedness which he hath in store for all his Faithful Followers.

Now let us come to the Particulars commended to our Observation and Learning in this Parable, taking them in order as they lie. Thus it begins—Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened, &c. 1. *Then*, i. e. when Christ shall come. The whole Chapter before this, being Christ's Answer to that Question of his Disciples. v 3. VVhat shall be the Sign of thy coming, and of the end of the World? Now the coming of Christ there spoken of by him principally and literally, was his coming to execute Vengeance on the Jews who crucified him, and to destroy their Temple, City and Nation by the *Roman* Armies. And all the Signs he gives them relate properly to that; but figuratively also to his coming at the end of the VVorld to Judge every Man according to his VVorks, of which Day and

Hour he tells them neither any Man, nor Angel knows, but God only, v. 36. He warns them therefore to be always watchful and ready, both for that, and for every other coming of his. Every one's Death being the end of the VWorld to him, and Christ's coming to call him, and translate him into another everlasting state. Therefore, saith he, be ye also ready, because the Son of Man's coming, either to Judge the Nation of the *Jews*, or to call you out of the World by Death, or to Judge the World, may be in such an Hour as you think not. v. 44. And then, at that Hour, whenever it is, you will find true what now I tell you in this Parable.

Now let me beg of you to take notice what our Saviour saith, *Luk. 18. 8. When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find Faith on Earth?* As much as to say, there are but a few will be found so faithful to God, and their own Souls, as to be in a fit Preparation for the Hour of Christ's coming, and a happy deliverance out of the Miseries of this World. Too few believe God's word concerning Christ's coming to Judge the World. Too few trust so firmly to the Promises of God by Christ to the Faithful, that (for the Love and Desire they have to the things promised, and in a comfortable hope and expectation of living for ever happy with God) will have the patience and courage to deny themselves, to despise the Riches, Pleasures and Vanities of the World, and the Flesh, to mortifie their Lusts, to want their carnal Wills and Desires, to resist Temptations, to restrain corrupt Inclinations and Affections, and to live in the practice of all Christian Verrues, and thereby prepare themselves for every coming of Christ. Few believe, and therefore few will

will be ready when Christ calls, either to Death or Judgment.

But let me beseech every one here to consider of it in time before it be too late, for you know not how soon it will be so. Consider, I say, what you know well enough, that Death will come very shortly. And how little soever any of you believe the things that Christ hath told you, concerning the necessity that there is of watchfulness and care to live a Christian and Religious Life, and of so spending all your time, as to be every moment of it prepared for Death and Judgment, then when you are departing out of this World, and must, whether you will or no, leave all that ever you loved in it behind you, you will find this true, which our gracious Jesus commends to your thoughts in this Parable, and with no worse Intent than to prevent our eternal Misery, by timely and sufficient warning to provide for our own safety, by walking (as St. Paul exhorts) circumspectly, nor as Fools, but as wise Eph. 5. 15. and as St. Peter. 2 Pet. 1. 10. Giving Diligence to make our Calling and Election sure, that so an Entrance may be Ministered to us abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. v. 11.

2. *Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened to ten Virgins, &c.* By the Kingdom of Heaven, called sometimes the Kingdom only, without any addition, sometimes the Kingdom of God, or of Christ, we are here (as in many other places) to understand the state and condition of Things under the Gospel, and 'tis all one with the Church of Christ, wherein he reigns as King: For God hath put all Things under his Feet, and gave him to be Head over all things to the Church, which

which is his Body or Kingdom. *Eph. 1. 22. 23.* And his Gospel is the Law whereby this Kingdom is to be govern'd, therefore called the Word of the Kingdom. *Mat 13. 19.* By the *Ten Virgins*, we are to understand all the Professors of the Christian Religion, such as having received the Gospel, or Word of the Kingdom submit themselves to the Government of Christ and Covenant by Baptism, to live as his obedient Subjects, observing all his Laws and Ordinances, and hoping for his Protection, and the Reward which he hath promised. When therefore it is said, *Then the Kingdom of Heaven shall be likened unto ten Virgins*, the meaning is this, that Jesus Christ our King, shall at his coming thus in like manner deal with all Christians, who profess themselves his Subjects in his Kingdom, as the Bridegroom is in this Parable said to deal with those ten Virgins, admitting as many as are always ready to enter with him into the Joy of him their Lord. *v. 22.* but for ever disowning and excluding those that are not ready for him.

And hence we are to learn in the first place, that as we are Christians, we are the Subjects of Christ in his Kingdom. This is a thing that we are apt to forget too much. It is here with us in relation to Christ, as it is with too many of us to our Earthly Kings. We are very well pleased to have Christ to be our Saviour and Deliverer, and enjoy the Privileges of his Kingdom, to have our Liberties preserved to us, but when this is done, we care not for his Laws, nor to be restrained in our Wills by his Government, how easy his Yoke, or light soever his Burden be. But we must remember, that how impatient soever we are, and not without great reason, of an abso-

absolute Monarchy of one Man over others; yet we must, if we will be Christians, and have Salvation by Christ, take him for our absolute Sovereign, and obey him without reserve. Teach them (saith he) to observe all things that I have commanded you. *Mat.* 28. 20. Yea, and we must willingly part with every thing that he is pleased to take from us; Father and Mother, and House and Lands, and Life it self. *Lu.* 14. 26. and bear patiently whatsoever he will lay upon us, deny our selves, and take up our Cross and follow him. *Mat.* 10. 38. Sell all, and give to the Poor when he commands it. *Mat.* 19. 21. Here must be no Dispute about our Liberties and Properties, for we have none at all, but all are in his Sovereign Prerogative which the Father hath bestow'd upon him: Who hath given him all Power both in Heaven and on Earth, *Mat.* 28. 18. And hath given all things into his Hand, *Job.* 13. 3. We our selves are not our own, for we are bought with a Price, *1 Cor.* 6. 19. 20. and therefore are we to have no Will, but what is entirely resigned unto his Will. Every high thing that exalteth it self against the Knowledge of God must be cast down, and every Thought brought into Captivity to the Obedience of Christ. *2 Cor.* 10. 15. None can be saved by Christ, but they only that are willing to be subdued by him, and account it their glory and their happiness to be ruled by him in all Things.

And indeed it is so when we duly consider it, for his Government can never degenerate into Tyranny. His Wisdom and Power and Goodness are all alike infinite, and therefore we are very sure that all his Commands are just, and all his Impositions reasonable. His Divine Perfection

ons exalt him above all Self Ends, and make it impossible for him to seek any advantage to himself. All his Design in the severest Laws and Dispensations of Providence is our good. And this is the thing that he esteems his glory to make us happy. As an Earthly Prince can give us no better Security, that he seeks our good, and not his own advantage in his Government, than upon all occasions to hazard his Life, and expose himself to all Dangers in our Defence: So Christ hath given us an Assurance of this beyond all Temptations to doubt of it, having voluntarily laid down his Life for our Redemption, and shed his Blood to make Atonement for our Sins, and to merit eternal Life for us. But this that he hath done and suffered for us will be of no advantage to us, if we submit not to his Government. For his Father will upon no other Terms forgive us, nor be reconciled unto us. God is willing to save us by his only Beloved Son, and Jesus Christ his only Son, was willing to do any thing, to suffer any thing to save us, so as may consist with the Honour of his Father. God the Father is willing to abate of the strictness of his first Law, and instead of a perfect Will, accept, for his Son's Sake, of a sincere Obedience; and God the Son hath made Satisfaction to his Father's Justice for all our past Sins, and for all our future Sins of meer Infirmary, or which we will yet repent of, and forsake, but he should be very partial to us, and very unfaithful to his Father, in the Office of a Mediator, if he should save us without a ready and constant submission to his Government. For so he should shew himself content, that God should be dishonour'd, and his Authority slighted, so we might be saved; which he can never be.

O how

O how little is this consider'd by us, whilst we live carelessly, and take our Pleasure, making it the end of all we do to please our selves, and behaving our selves so loosely, as if Christ's only Business into the World had been to deliver us from the Damnation which we deserved for our Sins; but not to give us any Laws to live by. I say, this is not considered as it ought to be, for if it were, we could not live at the Rate we now do, that is, as most of us live, quite contrary to the Laws Christ has given us, and which are the Laws of his Kingdom, and yet hope to be saved by him. If we will not go blindly or madly on to our own destruction, we must remember that we still live as much as ever in the Kingdom of God, and are the Subjects of Christ who is now our King, and cannot be saved by him without a constant Obedience to him.

3. Seeing that the state of Christians under the Gospel is not only a Kingdom, but the Kingdom of Heaven, and of God: We learn hence, that our Conversation here on Earth ought to be an Heavenly Conversation, and a Godly Life. It is not an Earthly Kingdom, such as the *Jews* look'd for in the *Messiah*, wherein they hoped to enjoy great Plenty of all Earthly Things, to Lord it over their Enemies, and to live free from all Worldly troubles and vexations; and because they found not the Holy Jesus when he came, a likely Person to put them into such a prosperous Condition, were therefore offended at him, and rejected him; and for the same reason he hath so few Followers now. No, as he told the *Jews* very plainly, his Kingdom is not of this World. *Joh. 18. 36.* neither cometh it with Observation. *Luk. 17. 20.* that is, it is not visible and observable,

servable, as Secular Kingdoms are for outward Pomp and Splendor, but it is commendable for its Purity, and is altogether Spiritual and Heavenly. The King of it is now gloriously reigning in Heaven, sitting at his Father's Right Hand in Celestial Power and Majesty; The Laws of it are Spiritual, reaching the Heart and Spirit in Man, which no Human Laws can touch; the Power whereby he reigns and governs the Hearts of Men, is the secret and invisible power of the Holy Ghost, by whom we are made Partakers of the Divine Nature, and the end of it is to make us Spiritually minded. *Rom. 8. 6.* which is Life and Peace; to purge our Hearts and Affections from every thing that is Earthly and Fleshly, crucifying the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts, crucifying the World to us, and us unto the World. *Gal. 6. 14.* So that henceforward we no more know Christ after the Flesh. *2 Cor. 5. 16.* for any outward Worldly advantages that we hope to have by him, — but as glorified in Heaven, and thence by the power of his Holy Spirit, transforming us into his own Image daily more and more, and by all Heavenly Vertues implanted in us, daily cleansing and renewing our Natures to render us meet for the Inheritance of the Saints in light: *purifying us, as himself is pure,* that we may be able to see him as he is, in the perfection of Holiness. Hence it is, that the Apostle saith of himself, and all sincere Christians, *Phil. 3. 10:* *Our Conversation is in Heaven, whence also we look for the Saviour our Lord Jesus Christ.* We live as Citizens of Heaven, for there we hope to live with Christ our King, and therefore all our Business is to learn to live so as we must do there, if we shall live there at all. Not as some do, *mind-*

ing Earthly Things, whose End, he tells us, v. 19. is destruction. In short, Heaven is the Christians Country, he is but a Stranger and Pilgrim upon Earth, and counts himself not at Home till he come to Heaven. Whilst we are conversant in the Body we are absent from the Lord. 2 Cor. 5. 6. Therefore saith St. Paul v. 8. we are willing rather to be absent from the Body, and to be present, or at Home with the Lord. Having therefore these Promises, let us cleanse our selves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God. c. 7. 1.

O how little is this considered by us, that as many as are Christians live already in the Kingdom of Heaven. For no other is the Kingdom of Christ, but the Kingdom of Heaven which is begun on Earth, but perfected in Heaven. The Marriage betwixt Christ and his Church, the Bridegroom and the Bride is made here, the Marriage Feast is held in Heaven. Tho' therefore the Lives of Christians cannot be by reason of our imperfect state so perfectly holy as in Heaven; yet must they be Heavenly, that is, holy, in as great a degree as Earth will admit of, even holy in all manner of Conversation, tho' not in the highest degree of perfection. 1 Pet. 1. 15. in Thought, in Word, in Deed, as it is written, be ye Holy, for God is Holy. And we were redeemed from our vain Conversation received by Tradition from our Fathers, with the precious Blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish, and without spot. v. 18, 19.

How can we think of all this (who profess our selves Christians, or the Subjects of the Holy and Heavenly Jesus) without Blushing and Trembling, when we reflect upon the ordinary course of

of our Lives? Alas, what is there that favours of Heaven about us? Are we not rather ashamed, that any thing should appear in our Conversation that looks Heavenly? Do not we strive quite contrary to the Apostles rule, *Rom. 12. 2.* to conform ourselves, even as much as we can or dare to this World, instead of being transformed by the renewing of the Spirit of our Mind, that we may prove what is that good and perfect, and acceptable will of God: For,

1. What is the Law we govern ourselves by? Is it the will of Christ, or is it not rather every one's own Will and Pleasure? Is it not every one's Humour and Lust? Now none of these are of the Father but of the World, *1 John 2, 16.*

2. What are the Patterns of Imitation, that we propound to our selves to live by? Are they Heavenly or Earthly: Are we followers of God as dear Children, walking in love, *Eph. 5, 1.* Take we care that the same mind be in us, that was in Christ Jesus, *Phil. 2, 5.* who made himself of no reputation. We pray that God's will may be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven; but are we not a great deal more solicitous to follow the Customs of Men in the World, than the example of the Holy Angels in Heaven?

3. What's our great delight? Is it in Holiness and Heavenly purity; and such Spiritual Exercises as tend towards Heaven? Or is it not rather in fulfilling the Lusts of the Flesh, and in those vain Poms and Vanities of the World, which in our Baptism we renounce?

4. What is our chief desire and hope, and end which we principally aim at in all we do? Do we seek those things which are above, where Christ

sits.

sitteth on the right hand of God? and set we our Affections on things above, and not on things on the Earth? Col. 3. 1, 2. Alas, who aims at any thing almost, but the things on Earth? What a bustle is about the Kingdoms of this World? And what Contrivances have we to come to a full share of the Wealth, and Honours, and Pleasures of this World? What doth the Rich and Great Man strive for, but to have more of this World than others? And what doth the Poor and Meaner Man labour for, but to get as much of this World as he can? O, how few are they, who are all their Life time striving to enter in at the strait Gate? Who are labouring night and day for the Meat that perisheth not, but endureth unto everlasting Life? And where then are Christians, the Subjects of Christ in the Kingdom of Heaven?

Matt. XXV. 1.

This Kingdom of Heaven shall be likened to ten Virgins.

THe number of these Persons with whom the Church, or Members of it is here compared, is not, I think, at all considerable in this place; it is not used to signify any Mystery in Religion, or to instruct us in any point of Faith or Duty. But because the number of Virgins to wait on the Bride at such Marriages was usually ten; therefore our Saviour mentions this number and if they had ordinarily been of any other number greater or less, he would have so expressed himself. That which is here considerable, is the quality of the Persons, they are Virgins Chast, undefiled Maidens; that is, at the Bridegroom's

groom's coming it will then appear, that he will own no other to belong to his Kingdom or Church which is his Spouse, but holy Persons of a Virgin Purity.

Observe by the way, that the Spouse or Bride of Christ, and the Virgins or Bride-Maids tho' in the Parable they be spoken of as divers Persons, as if the Bride were one, and the Virgins that wait on her, were other Persons distinct from her, yet are they not several Persons indeed, but the self same. The Virgins are Christians, and singly consider'd, they are so many single Christians, and single Persons distinct one from another, and so they are ten; or of a great number, that is, as many as there are Christians in the World, and so they are said to be Bride-maids who wait upon her. But now these same single Christians taken jointly or collectively, are the Bride herself, on whom they are said to wait, that is, Catholick or Universal Church of Christ, as it is one body made up of many Members: And here we learn two things; 1. The Nature of Christ's Church. 2. The Office and Duty of us the Members of it.

1. The Nature of Christ's Church. It is the Universal Body of all Christians throughout the World, as we profess to believe it in the Creed. The Holy Catholick or Universal Church; this is the Bride or Spouse of Christ, and the Body of Christ, whereof he is the only Husband and Head. *For as the Body is one, and hath many Members, and all the Members of that one Body being many, are one Body; so also is Christ, i. e. the Body or Church of Christ, 1 Cor. 12. 12. We grow up into him in all things which is the Head, even Christ: From whom the whole Body fitly joyned together,*

ber, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the Body, unto the edifying of itself in love. Eph. 4. 15, 16. And Ch. 5. The Apostle speaking of the Marriage Bond and Conjugal Union and Affection, that ought to be betwixt Man and Wife, he tells us, that tho' all that he there saith be true of Men and their Wives, yet principally he speaks it of Christ and the Church. For as the Husband is the head of the Wife, even so is Christ of the Church, and the Saviour of the Body, v. 23. He loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of Water by the Word; That he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish, 26, 27. This is the Bride, the Lamb's Wife. Rev. 21. 9. All Christians jointly. For, saith the Apostle, by one Spirit, we are all baptized into one Body, 1 Cor. 12, 13.

2. The Duty of us the Members; for, saith the Apostle, v. 27. Now ye are the Body of Christ, and Members in particular, i. e. jointly taken, ye are one Body or Church of Christ severally considered, ye are Members of that one Body, as the Virgins in the Text jointly are the Bride, singly are the Bride-maids. And what's their Duty as such? It is supposed here to attend the Bride, and wait to do their Office at the Bridegroom's coming. This then is it that we learn, that every single Christian is to consider himself as a Member of Christ's Body the Church. And so

1. If he be separated from the Body he dies, because he is so separated from the Head, which

communicates its Life to the Body. The Branch must abide in the Vine, or it is fruitless, and withereth, *Job. 15. 4. 6.* There is to be no Schism or Breach made in the Body. *1 Cor. 12. 25.* And this is it *St. Paul* exhorts to, *Eph. 4.* That we endeavour to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, v. 3. because there is but one Body and one Spirit of Christians, v. 4.

2. Contribute what he can to the Health and Life of the Body, and every Member of the Body. For unto every one of us is given Grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. *Eph. 4. 7.* And all is to this end, for the edifying of the Body of Christ, v. 12. For tho' there be a great difference between one Member and another in dignity and usefulness, yet should no Member envy or despise another, but help and serve one another according to its Ability. To this end every Member must,

1. Keep its place and station, and do the Office that belongs to it. If it be a Foot, it must be content to walk and be guided by the Eye, and not presume to see for it self or to guide, but to bear the Body.

2. Be at peace with the rest, if the Hand will tear out the Eye ; the Body will suffer by it.

3. Serve the Body, and the rest of the Members according to its Office. The Members are to have the same care one for another, *1 Cor. 12, 25.* *And whether one member suffer, all the Members suffer with it, or one Member be honoured, all the Members rejoyce with it, v. 26.*

O how little is all this consider'd by Christians at this Day ! How is the Body of Christ torn in pieces ? And how do the Members of it, that pretend to be so, divide the Body whereof they pre-

pretend to be Members? And how do they envy and malign, bite and devour one another?

2. The Church of Christ is likened unto such Persons as are Virgins; and what doth this teach us; but that all the Members of Christ's Church are to be of a Virgin Purity undefiled, and holy in all manner of Conversation. He that was born of a pure Virgin, the Holy one of God, will Marry no other but a pure Virgin, to such as cleanse themselves from all filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, and are ever perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God. *2 Cor. 7. 1.* Now to a Virgin belong these things,

1. That she have no Husband already, such are the Members of Christ's Church, not Married to any other God in any other Religion. No Idolaters, no Sectaries, or Followers of Men, saying I am of *Paul, &c.* wedded to this or that Man's opinion, but Followers of Christ only. I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a Chast Virgin to Christ. *2 Cor. 11. 2.*

2. That she be not of wanton or wandering Affections; such are the Members of Christ, not setting their affections on things below, but on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right Hand of God. *Col. 3. 1.*

3. That she be adorn'd with Modesty, a Virgin blush being the most natural paint for a Virgin's Face. They are no Members of Christ, who have lost Modesty, and are not ashamed of every Sinful thing, or any thing that argues Levity and Wantonness; how much less they that glory in their Shame? Thou hadst a Whore's Forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed. *Jer. 3. 3.* Virgins were veiled and covered in the Church. *1 Cor. 11.*

4. Retiredness and reservedness become a Vir-

gin. And the Members of Christ, must not freely mix with all companies, nor converse too much abroad in the World, for fear of Snares and Temptations. 'Tis the character of a good Wife, and more of a Virgin, to be Chaste, Keepers at home. *Tit. 2. 5.* Keep close to the Church the House of God, and take heed of hearkning to the Voice of Strangers.

3. The Church of Christ shall be likened to Virgins that took their Lamps, made a fair shew of profession, and preparation for the business they went about. They took Lamps, and some Oil in them.

Learn, that an outward Christian profession, and shew of Religion, is necessary to make one but a seeming Member of the Church.

With what face then can they pretend to be of the Church, who have not so much as this shew, but the quite contrary?

We all took Lamps in our hands in Baptism; but have not many cast them away since? Where's our Light shining before Men?

We have been some of us Catechized, and come to hearing in the Church; to what end, if not to get supplies of Oil? but alas, how few do so.

There may be Lamps without Oil, Profession without sincere Piety; but no Oil without Lamps, no sincerity without external Profession. *With the Heart Man believeth unto Righteousness, and with the Mouth Confession is made unto Salvation, Rom. 10. 10.*

4. They went forth to meet the Bridegroom, i. e. Towards the Bride's Chamber, to go thence when 'twas time.

1. We must go forth. 1. From home, our Carnal selves. 2. From the World, and all its allurements. 2. We

2. We must go to the Bride's Lodging, to the Church, that must prepare us for Christ, when ever he comes.

3. Our great end in all is to meet the Bridegroom, to wait constantly for his appearance, that we may be ready to enter with him to the Marriage Feast : Alas, who doth this ?

Matt. XXV. 2, 3, 4

And five of them were Wise, and five were Foolish, they that were Foolish took their Lamps, and took no Oil with them ; but the Wise took Oil in their Vessels, with their Lamps.

When Christ comes to Judgment, or when he calleth any one of us out of the World by Death ; it will then be found true, that it will fare with all the Professors of Christianity, as here it is said to have done with the ten Virgins, who in this Parable represent to us all Christians in Profession, who have taken their Lamps, *i. e.* have entered on the Profession of Christian Religion, and are gone forth ; *i. e.* by Vow have engaged themselves to Renounce the Devil, the World, and the Flesh, and pretend to meet the Bridegroom, to wait till Christ come, hoping to be entertained in Heaven by him.

Now observe, our Blessed Saviour here shows us, v. 2. of what sorts of People, the Visible Church, or Society of Christian Professors consists. In the two next Verses he distinguisheth them one from another, and lets us see how they differ.

1. He shews of what sorts of People the Visible Church consists, Good and Bad. All in

D d 2

Profession

Profession good, all Virgins as they pretend, and would be accounted Pure and Holy, but all are not so in truth and sincerity, who make some shew of being so. Some are sincerely, what they seem; and some are Hypocrites, and seem what they are not. Some are wise, and some are foolish.

This teacheth us, that we are not to expect a visible Church so pure on Earth, as to have no bad People in it. Nor must we seperate from every Church which hath any corrupt Members in it, for then (as the Apostle saith ———) *we must go out of the World*; at least we must forsake all Church-Communion, and go alone by our selves. The wise Virgins were not shut out, tho' they had all the while till the Bridegroom's coming, been of the same Company with the Foolish. Let every one therefore labour to keep himself wise and good, and do as much as in him lieth to make others so too. And when Christ cometh he will not reject him, because he had been among those whom he would have had as good as himself, but could not make them so.

Now, whereas our Saviour here saith of the Ten, that five were wise, and five were foolish; we are not so to understand it, as if the number of the good Christians were equal to that of the bad. For Christ hath told us himself, that his Flock is a little Flock, *and that they are but few that find the strait Gate, and go in thereat, whilst many enter in through the wide one that leadeth to Destruction.* Mat. 7. 13. But as he mention'd ten Virgins, because that was the most usual number of such Virgins; not straitning the number of Professors thereby to any certain number, so he also takes the number five as most obvious, to signify

nise some, or a part of them that profess Christianity, not meaning to divide them into two equal halves: but 'tis all one as if he had said, some of them were wise, and some were foolish. And if we should understand it otherwise than thus indefinitely, then must we be tied to believe contrary things, for in the next Parable of the Talents, to improve their Talents, and enter into Joy, and one only is said to hide his Talent, and to be condemned for it. And *Mat. 13.* in the Parable of the Sower, one sort of good Hearers we find, but three of unprofitable ones. But our Saviour seems to speak carelessly in this Matter on purpose, to teach us not to be curious about it, as a thing that little concerns us to know. And therefore when one, *Luk. 13. 23.* ask'd him, if few should be saved? He gives no Answer at all to his Question, but bids him strive to enter in at the strait Gate; mind his own Salvation. So let us be of the number of the wise Virgins, be they more or fewer. So much for the distinction of Professors in *v. 2.*

v. 2. He shews us how these two sorts do differ the one from the other. The one are called wise, the other foolish.

v. 3. He tells us what was the Folly of the Foolish, that is, that taking their Lamps, they took no Oil with them. He means, that tho' they had Oil in their Lamps, yet they took with them no more than just what was at present in them: So they say *v. 8.* Our Lamps are gone out, that is, their Oil was spent, and they could not keep them without more.

v. 4. He tells us what was the Wisdom of the Wise, that is, they took not only Oil in their Lamps, but they took Oil in their Vessels with

their Lamps, so that they provided sufficiently to supply their Lamps with fresh Oil as fast as it spent.

By both these sorts of Virgins 'tis our blessed Saviour's design to teach us, what it is to be a Christian to any purpose, for be sure, we had as good be no Christians so much as in Profession, if we be not Christians to some good purpose; that we may get some good by being so. And our Saviour calls such an one a Fool; and it must needs be granted he is so. *If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thy self. Prov. 9. 12.* Thou shalt reap Profit by thy Wisdom. But how wise soever any one thinks himself, 'tis certain he's a Fool, if he do himself no good by his Wisdom.

Now he that takes his Lamp lighted at present only, and takes not care enough to keep it burning to the end, that is, he that undertakes the Profession of Christianity, but continues not really so to his Dying Day, is the foolish one, that is a Christian to no purpose, and he only shall gain by his Religion, who takes care to persevere, and hold out to the end of his Life. We learn therefore hence how to judge of our selves, whether we be wise or Fools, Christians to any good purpose, or to none. For 'tis evident hence, that three things are necessary to make one a Christian to purpose.

1. That he go forth with his Lamp in his Hand. That he constantly, notwithstanding any danger he may incur by it, profess his Religion openly in the Face of the World, not like them. *Mat. 13. 21.* who made a Flourish for a while, but in Tribulation, and Temptation fall away.

2: That

2. That he have Oil in his Lamp, and that his Lamp burn and give light; that Men by his shining Light may see his good Works, *Matt. 5. 16.* That he bring forth the Fruit of the Spirit, in Love, Joy, Peace, Long-Suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance, *Gal. 5. 22, 23.*

3. That he have Oil in his Vessel enough to supply his Lamp to the end, that he hold out or persevere as long as he Liveth, shining as a light in the World, holding forth the word of Life, not suffering the Devil by his Temptations to blow out, nor the World with its allurements to stifle, nor the Flesh with his Lusts to extinguish his Light. He alone that is faithful unto Death, shall have a Crown of Life. *Rev. 2. 10.* If the Righteous fall from his Righteousness, in vain was he Righteous at all. *Ezek. 18.*

It is for want of serious consideration of this, that tho' we have among us many Christian Professors, we have few wise Men or good Christians. Tho' we have been baptized, and keep Company with Christians, doing as we see others do; yet we, it may be, never once thought in Sobriety what it is to be a Christian, and therefore we continue most of us Fools, making a vain shew of what we are not, and hoping for that shew to be happy in the end, and this is our great folly; for what pains we take to be thought Christians, or to be saved by Christ, is all lost; and we have been labouring only to deceive, and undo our selves. And is not this the part of a Fool? It will appear so when the end comes.

How comes this? 'Tis too easy to see.

1. The greatest part of Christians do no more, and therefore are ill. ashamed to do more; and

2dly, count it needless ; for, think we, all these surely will not perish,

12. Most do thus, because, 1. They gain by the name of Christians, the Privileges that Christians enjoy in the World, by Vertue of the Laws. 2. They would lose, by sincerity, the advantages which Hypocrisy and Sin bring them in the World, it being now contrary to what it was of old. Then the Name was crime enough and mortal ; therefore few but sincere persons professed it : Now the Name is profitable, and therefore every one for self ends puts it on.

Matt. XXV. 1, 3, 4.

Let us take heed then of deceiving ourselves foolishly with a naked Profession. No Man shall come to Eternal Life, but by patient continuance in well doing. *Rom. 2, 7.* We must do well, continue doing well, and tho' we lose or suffer by it, continue with patience doing well. This it is to be wise unto Salvation, and to have Oil in our Vessels with our Lamp. This Oil, wherewith our Lamps must be fed, is,

1. A constant care to mortifie our Lusts more and more, our Covetousness, Voluptuousness and Pride, these are like Water which keeps our Lamps from burning.

2. As great a care to subdue and tame all our Passions, and keeping them under good Government, suffering neither Joy nor Sorrow, Boldness nor Fear, Love nor Hatred, Anger nor Tameness, Desire or Loathing, nor any other to be immoderate.

3. And earnest striving against, and checking all the corrupt Inclinations of our Vicious Nature,

ture, checking them in time, and by meditation, consideration, resolution, and watchfulness over our selves, and against Temptations, endeavour to alter and change them into better.

4. A daily exercise of all Christian Graces and Vertues, walking in obedience to God's Holy Laws, and doing our duty to God and our Neighbour, labouring to do what good we can in the World.

Unless we have this Oil in our Vessels, our Lamps will go out and signifie nothing.

O how fain would we content ourselves without all this? How unwilling are we to think, that all this is necessary to make us good Christians? See where our folly lieth.

1. We would fain be happy when we die, so far are we Wise enough.

2. We would fain be happy here, and so we might be, if we were Wise. For all the happiness we can have here, lies in the hopes of, and preparation for eternal happiness, by a cheerful subjection to God's Will, a comfortable trust and confidence in his Promises, quiet submission to his Providence, a pleasing contentedness with our State, and a moderate use of, and rejoycing in what we have. But,

3. We would be happy in another World, and yet have a happiness, such as we fancy in this too. That is, we would have our Wills, and humour our Lusts, and follow our own Inclinations, and yet be blessed in the end. Here we are Fools indeed, to think that God will bless us for serving our Flesh in disobeying him. Or else,

4. We are careless and secure, and think of no blessedness, but in this World; and here we are

are foolish again, knowing that we can never be made happy by that which is imperfect and perishing, and such are all things in this World; and that God hath told us our blessedness lieth in another World: Or

5. We would make an exchange with God, and hope he will take what we give him, instead of what he demands. We hope he may accept of a great deal of Superstition or Ceremony, or Formality, instead of Crucifying the Flesh, governing our Passions, cleansing our Hearts, reforming our Lives, obeying all his Laws. And if this will do, we'll bear pains and cost enough. So the Jews would give him Sacrifices and Offerings, and Traditional Observances; but they will not part with their Sins. So the Papists will give him Masses and Pilgrimages, painted Temples, and abundance of Cringes; yea, and Alms too in plenty, and many good Works, as to the matter of them; any thing to merit Heaven, and yet be allowed to enjoy their Lusts. And so will the Protestants too give him long Prayers, and sighs and groans, and abundance of their time in hearing Sermons, and all the Sabbath to a minute; or else they will go to Church every day, and often in the day to the Cloister, and bow or stand, and be exceeding formal; so that still they live at their pleasure.

Good God, that after all we have heard of thee, we should yet be so foolish, as to entertain such childish thoughts as these of thee? As if God could not distinguish between Wheat and Chaff, between Oil and a little Air in our Lamps. These thin things without Substance, will not feed our Lamps with Light. No, the Oil we must have, must be a living Faith, a fervent Love to
God

God and Man, a purifying of Heart and Life from all filthiness, and a constant and sincere practice of true Christian Piety, and a daily growing in Grace and Goodness of all sorts. He that is found, when he dies, or when Christ comes to Judgment, without all these in Sincerity and Truth, will be found with an empty Vessel, and a Lamp gone out, and will be sent to seek his happiness amongst the foolish Virgins, which took their Lamps, but took no Oil with them. Only they who persevere unto the end in the constant practise of Righteousness and Charity, Holiness and Godliness; and make it their Exercise, to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards Men, are the wise Virgins who shall enter into Heaven with the Bridegroom when he cometh. O that we were Wise, that we understood this, that we would consider our latter end.

Verse 5.

While the Bridegroom tarried, they all Slumbered and Slept.

OUr Blessed Saviour is the Bridegroom, to whom the Church, i. e. all the true Christians are espoused upon Earth, and shall live with him eternally happy in Heaven. At his coming then shall we ever be with the Lord, 1 Thess. 4. 17. But how long it will be e're he come, is a thing that he hath not thought good for us to know, but we are to live in a constant expectation of it, and

and be always prepared to meet him whenever we shall be called ; and how soon, or suddenly that may be, we know not. This is all that we live for, that we may be fitted to live eternally. And is it not strange, that the only thing we live for, and which if it be neglected, we had better never have been born, should be the thing which we generally least of all think of, or consider. Alas, we are spending our days as a tale that is told, they will be at an end before we are aware of it, and we little think what we have to do whilst we trifle them away. This, together with the reason of it, we are told in the Text.

1. They all Slumbered and Slept, even the Wise as well as the Foolish, both grew drowsy and fell asleep.

2. Because the Bridegroom tarried.

The time of Christ's tarrying, is the day of Grace, the time of Mercy all the time we Live, and indeed between his Ascension, and coming again to judge the World in Righteousness ; but as to every one's own concern, it is the time that waits for his making ready, and spares him in long sufferance. And this is the time that Christians all asleep in, that they are apt to lose, and grow so careless in, as to neglect all necessary preparation for their meeting the Lord.

Here then we have these things to consider.

1. That we are all apt to fall asleep.

2. What's the difference between the Sleeping of the wise and foolish.

3. That the reason of our Sleeping is Christ's tarrying.

4. The unreasonableness that it should be so.

1. That we are all of us apt to be drowsy, and fall asleep. This needs no other proof, but our own

own observation and experience. By them that slumber, we understand such as are, as it were, half asleep, between sleeping and waking, heavy in all their duties, and listless without Life and Spirit in what they do. By them that Sleep, we understand such whose Senses are for that time quite useless, quite overcome with Sleep, so as to be in a manner like Dead Men as to all rational Actions. And thus it is with all Men more or less, not the wisest or the best, but we sometimes slumber and sleep.

1. We are all good and bad, are apt to slumber and be drowsy, both in all Religious and Holy Duties, and in watching against Temptations. And as one in an imperfect sleep or slumber, has a thousand fancies and foolish thoughts in his Head, and considers nothing thoroughly and to purpose, but many things jumbled together confusedly: So is it too much with us all. We Pray, and Hear, and Read, and Meditate, Dully, Coldly, Heavily and Confusedly. We have too little warmth and vigour, and Spirit in all we do, and a thousand vain and idle Thoughts disturb us. And whilst we should be on our watch against Temptations, we are Remiss, and imaginations of our own Strength, or little danger, and the harmless use of the thing too often abate our Vigilance. And indeed not to insist on particulars, we slumber away thus the greatest part of our time in a listlessness of Mind, and are regardless how we spend it, whether in vain Thoughts or idle Words, or frivolous Discourses, or childish Mirth; and are seldom so 'thoroughly awake, as we ought to be: And,

2dly. We are often, even the best of us, cast into a dead Sleep for a time, drawn for want of care and vigilance into many actual Sins, as *David* into Adultery and Murder, and *St. Peter* into denying of Christ. Or if by the Grace of God we are kept from gross and notorious Sins, yet are there both omissions of doing Good, and commissions of doing Evil, greater or smaller, that we are ever and anon guilty of. In many things we offend all. *Ja. 3. 2.* Who can say, he has cleansed his Heart from all evil Thoughts and Desires; or that he offends not sometimes with his Tongue; or that he attends so diligently to all his Actions, that he leaves no duty undone, or that he doth nothing that is Sinful? No, *if we say we have no Sin, we deceive ourselves, 1 Feb. 1. 8.* We must all confess, not the best of us excepted, that we are too apt to slumber and sleep. This is enough. 1st. To keep the best of us very humble in the Sense of our weakness, that sometimes (as the Apostles) tho' so often warned by our loving Saviour, and in the midst of so many dangers, yet we are sometimes unable to watch with him one hour. 2dly. To excite us to more care, considering that how much more apt we are by nature to fall asleep, the more means we should use to keep ourselves awake. And 3dly, to make us more compassionate towards others, and not to insult over them, when we see them overtaken in a fault, considering ourselves how apt we are to be Tempted. *Gal. 6. 1.* Therefore with all meekness and pitty, we should endeavour to awake and restore them? 'Tis cruelty to Pinch and Beat those who will be awakened with a Call.

But now there may be very ill use made of
what

what has been said, if it be not rightly taken. For on the one side (may the wicked Men say) if all Sleep, the good as well as bad, wise and foolish, we do no worse than the best do, and therefore we may escape as well as they. And on the other side, if all Sleep (may the scrupulous Christian say) then are we in the same condition with the worst, and how can we hope for better usage than they? It is necessary therefore to shew,

2. What's the difference between the sleeping of the wise and of the foolish Virgins. And tho' they all slept we shall find, their guilt was not all alike, for then they should have fared alike at the Bridegroom's coming. either all should have entered in with him, or all should have been shut out by him. But seeing it was not so, we are sure they were not alike faulty, tho' they all slumber'd and slept. Consider then,

1. It is not all one to Sleep always, or very much; and now and then to fall asleep, and that seldom. And thus it is with these two sorts, the good and bad Christian. The foolish Virgin or bad Christian, either slumbers or sleeps always, is never thoroughly awake to God, sleeps on in an habitual course of Negligence and Wickedness, and if he seem awake doing any good thing, he doth but seem so, for he is still slumbering, and doth all in meer formality, which is but a shadow of Religion, as a Dream is of waking. Or if his Conscience be sometimes awakened, it is but for a Fit, and he quickly falls asleep, returns to his Sin and careless course of Life again. But now the wise Virgin or good Christian, is in the main habit and course of his Conversation awake, careful to serve God, and but seldom is surprized by Sleep, or by Temptation led into Sin: he is quickly awake again,
but

and the very Vexation and Grief he has for having slept, keeps him awake, and more watchful over himself for the time to come.

2. 'Tis not all alike, to Sleep willingly, to delight in Sleep, and to use means of provoking Sleep ; and to Sleep unwillingly, through mere infirmity of nature, and against all the means one can use to keep himself Awake. And this the difference between the Wise and Foolish, good and bad Christian. The bad Christian indulgeth himself in Sleep or Sinfulness, and delight in nothing more than in fulfilling his Lusts of all sorts. He therefore shuns not, but ventures upon Temptations, as pleasing Allurements to Sleep ; and takes Opiates to make him Sleep. If his Conscience be awakned, and grow so troublefom to him, that it will not let him Sleep quietly, he seeks out means to silence it, Sinful Company, Drunkenness, Feasting, Sporting, any thing he can think on, to still the disturbance it makes in his Breast, that he may Sleep again : He makes him a soft and easy Bed, shuts the Windows, forbids all Noise that he may Sleep ; that is, he useth Idleness, Ease and Pleasure ; shuts out Reading, Meditation, &c. least the Light should break in upon him, and keep him Awake ; and will not endure Reproof, Rebuke, or seasonable Admonition, the ungrateful Noise that would keep him from Sleep. But now on the contrary, the good Man takes all the care he can to keep himself Awake, his Conscience sensible and tender, and his Thoughts busy about his Work. He perfectly hates Sleeping, Carelessness and Sin, and delights in his Duty, and useth all helps to keep himself constantly awake. If he chance to Nod, even that startles him, and makes him afraid of falling asleep. He shuns all provocations

cations to Sleep, all immoderate Pleasures, all Drunkenness and Gluttony, and Temptations of any sort. He Prays and Reads, and keeps good Company, and is exceeding thankful to any one that with seasonable Reproof or Admonition awakens him, and keeps constantly in the Light, and busy at some good work, that he may prevent his falling asleep any more.

3. It is not all one to sleep till all the Oil be spent, and be without Supply; and to sleep and wake again before the Lamp be gone out, and having Oil remaining to supply it with. Now the foolish Virgin, or negligent Christian lets the time slip, and sleeps out the Opportunity, and takes no care till it be too late to prepare his Soul by repentance of all Sins, and the Practice of Christian Vertues, till the Bridegroom come; and so hath no time to prepare for Heaven in. But the good Christian plieth his time, and lays hold always on the present Opportunity, and by daily repentance and amendment of Life, renewing his Vows, and strengthening his Resolutions, and making the Practice of Goodness easy and familiar to him, tho' he may slip into Sin, is easily recovered, and has only that one Sin to repent of wholly, and not that neither as a wilful one, when he is called forth.

It is easy then to see a great difference between these two sorts of Slumberers and Sleepers, so that the one have no reason to encourage themselves by the Example of the other, nor the other any reason to be dejected by any sort of likeness to the first. We come therefore

3^{dly}, To the reason of this slumbering and sleeping, which is the Bridegroom's tarrying. While the Bridegroom tarried, &c. viz. Christ's

not coming hastily upon us, is that which makes us so apt to be careless. This our Saviour intimates, c. 24. 43. *If the good Man of the House had known in what Watch the Thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his House to be broken up, and v. 48. If the Evil shall say in his Heart, my Lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow Servants, and to eat and drink with the Drunken.* Some say, where is the promise of his coming? Hence they walk after their own lusts, 2 Pet. 3. 4. This seeming delay hath this ill Effect, in some measure, both on Good and Bad.

I. The Good endeavour to live in a constant expectation of his Coming, and labour daily to be prepared for it; but because of it, tho' the Spirit be willing, yet the Flesh is weak. *Mat. 26. 41.* and because of that they sometimes sleep, do what they can. For they find many Crosses and Troubles, and Patience sometimes grows weak, and will not hold out; they see their Persecutors the Wicked, prosper while they suffer; and because Christ does not come to revenge them so speedily as they wish, this sometimes frets and galls them too much; however they are but Men, and the longer they live, meet with the more Temptations, and sometimes are laid asleep by them; and the Multitude of even necessary Worldly Business diverts them often too much from the care they should be taking to their ways. An uninterrupted Vigilance is hardly possible to Mortals. **2.** The Bad by the delay of Christ's Coming to Judgment, harden themselves in their confidence, either that he approves of their ways, because he comes not to execute some Judgment upon them, or, that all they hear of his coming signifies

signifies nothing, and that he will not come; or that yet they shall have time enough, his Coming is not so near, but that they may have time enough to prepare for it. It will be then time enough to awake out of Sleep, when they think his coming is near at hand: Old Age, or Sickness, or something will give them warning enough to make ready for him.

Thus are Men apt to drive off their Duty, and sleep on still, as long as they think Christ drives off his Coming. And they will think he drives it off, as long as they see him not, because they have a mind he should do so, and they would sleep quietly in their Sins, and enjoy the pleasure of their idle Dreams as long as they can. This is our great Folly and Madness, to put the thing which is of greatest concernment, and requires all the haste we can make, to the last and most uncertain time of all other.

4. Which is the last thing to be observed, the unreasonableness of Sleeping, because the Bridegroom tarrieth. And this appeareth on this two fold Account. 1. That his tarrying is no Argument that he will not come. 2^{dly}, That the time of his tarrying is uncertain, and 3^{dly}, That it is quite to a contrary end.

1. The Bridegroom's tarrying is no Argument that he will not come. He hath assured us on the contrary, that he will certainly come, but he never told us, that he would come at such a time. Had he done so, and that time set by him, had been past, we might begin to doubt he would not come. We argue well against the Jews for our Saviour's first coming in the Flesh: He promised to come within such a time as the Temple was standing, and the Sceptre not quite departed

from *Judah*; but the Temple is long since destroyed, and the Sceptre departed, therefore Christ is already come. But because he never set any time for his second coming, therefore we cannot argue thus, because he hath tarried till now, he will not come. It is not then safe sleeping, because Christ tarrieth hitherto. Nay, yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. *Heb. 10. 37.*

2. His tarrying is uncertain as to the time of it, he hath hid it from us, and hath often told us so, that we neither can nor must know it, till it be come. Now how absurd a thing is it in any one to sleep, and presume of the Lord's tarrying yet longer, when he hath hid the time of his coming from us, that we might presume on no such thing, but live in a continual expectation of it, as of a thing which may be to day, or to Morrow, or at any other time, for ought we can know of it.

3. His tarrying is to a quite contrary end, as himself hath taught, that is to make us very vigilant and watchful, to keep us from sleeping; yea, 'tis in mercy to us, and much long suffering that he tarries, that we may have time enough to do our Duty in, not to sleep but to work, to repent of our sleeping so long, and to redeem the time that we have lost. Now should not the *Riches of God's Goodness and Forbearance and long suffering, lead us to repentance?* *Rom. 2. 4.* Or should we sleep on till that day come upon us unawares; and whilst we sleep treasure up Wrath unto our selves, to make it a Day of fierce Wrath and Fiery Indignation to us?

Having seen how unreasonable a thing it is to encourage ourselves by the Lord's tarrying to slumber and sleep. Let us rouse up our selves at length,

and the sceptre not being departed
most

'tis late enough, and trim up our Lamps, that we may be ready to enter in with the Lord into Light eternal, Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory.

Verse 6.

And at Midnight there was a crie made, behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.

Here in this Verse our Saviour gives a timely warning to all Christians what to expect, shewing us, withal, how dangerous a thing it is to encourage our selves by Christ's Long Suffering and Patience (which we may understand by his tarrying) to sleep on, and grow careless in our way of living. For when we least of all think of it, he will come. The Virgins all slumbered and slept, because of the Bridegroom's long tarrying; yet did not this prevent his coming, but at last he came, a cry was made that awak'd them out of their Sleep, and open'd their Eyes; Behold the Bridegroom cometh, he is at Hand, make hast: Yea, and when they least thought of it, suddenly at Midnight. These then are the things that we are to learn from this verse, and they are weighty matters of greatest Concernment to every one of us.

1. The Bridegroom, that is, Christ Jesus will come.

2. The time of his coming will be sudden, when least expected.

3. A cry shall then awake us all to meet him.

1. *Christ Jesus* the Bridegroom will certainly come. He is once come to espouse the World to himself, and being ascended again into Heaven, the Heavens must receive him till the time of Restitution of all things, which God hath spoken

by the Mouth of his Holy Prophets, since the World began. *Act. 3. 21. is c.* Till all things be fulfilled, which the Prophets have foretold shall be before his return. Before he departed, he told his Apostles, that he would see them again, not only after his Resurrection for a while. *Job. 16. 16.* But saith he, I will come again and receive you unto my self, that where I am, there ye may be also. *Job. 14. 3.* And, indeed, the work that he hath yet to do, and the promise that he hath made, assure us both that it is fit he should come, and that certainly he will come,

1. The Work which he hath yet to do, speaks it fit that he should come. He hath done but part of his Work as Mediator between God and Man. He hath done the work of a Prophet, in Revealing his Father's Will to the World; he hath done it in Person, and he is yet doing it by his Ministers, to whom he hath committed the word of Reconciliation. *2 Cor. 5. 18.* Who pray us in Christ's stead, that we would by betrothing our selves to Christ, be reconcil'd unto God, and not receive this inestimable Grace and Favour of God in vain. He hath done the work of an High Priest, in offering himself a perfect sacrifice for the Sins of the World, and hath reconcil'd us to God by his own Blood, and he is still doing it, for being by his Blood enter'd in the holiest of all, even the highest Heavens—— there he appeareth in the presence of God for us.—— And is our Advocate with the Father, ever living to make intercession for us. *1. Job.*

2. 1. He is doing the Office of a King, he hath given Laws to his Church, and is ruling them by those Laws, and over-ruling his, and her Enemies, and must Reign, till they all be put under his

Foot, but this is not yet done. In vain had he given Laws, and appointed Officers under him, as he hath done to see them observ'd, if he would never come to call Men to account, and judge them by those Laws, rewarding his Obedient Subjects, and punishing the Rebellious. His Spouse the Church is yet in an obscure condition, and a very changeable one and imperfect; but he hath promised to make her a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. *Eph. 5. 27.* She is now often under a Cloud and driven into the Wilderness, and groaning under persecution, and 'tis but fit and a righteous thing with God to Recompence Tribulation to them that trouble her, and to her that is troubled, Rest, when the Lord Jesus shall be reveal'd from Heaven. *2 Thes. 4. 6, 7.* Yea, 'tis very fit, that the Lord of Glory, who came in all Humility, abasing himself, and making himself of no Reputation, being in the form of a Servant, despised of Men, and set at naught; should once shew himself to the World in Glory and Majesty, appear like himself the great and glorious God, and Reign in Glory and Power, saying, *Those mine Enemies who would not that I should Reign over them, bring them forth, and slay them before me, Luk. 19. 27.* And his promise hath assured us that he shall certainly come, and come in greatest Glory, and with most terrible Majesty, when he will make every proud and prosperous Sinner tremble, and call to the Mountains and the Rocks to fall on them, and cover them from the wrath of the Lamb, finding, that he hath but been merrily treasuring up unto himself wrath against that day of wrath, and Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of God. *Rom. 2. 5.* Before he went away, he Com-

manded his Apostles to preach unto the People, and to testify, that it is he which was ordain'd of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. *Act. 10. 42.* And when he went up in the Clouds, which received him out of the Apostles sight, two Men *i. e. Angels* stood by 'em in white Apparel, which also said, ye Men of Gallilee, why stand ye gazing up unto Heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen him go into Heaven. *Act. 1. 10, 11.* He shall come in the Clouds of Heaven with Power and great Glory. *Mat. 24. 30.* Behold he cometh with Clouds, and every Eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all Kindreds of the Earth shall wail because of him, even so, Amen. *Rev. 1. 7.* Then shall he come to execute Righteous Judgment upon all, as it was of old Prophefied by Righteous Enoch, the 7th from Adam. Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his Saints to execute Judgment upon all. *Jude 14. 15.* I shall add no more of this now, but proceed to the second Point.

2. His coming shall be very sudden, and when least expected, even at Midnight, whilst the Virgins are slumbering and sleeping. It is not meant that Christ's coming will be in the Night, and much less, just at such an hour of the Night. It is a Parable we are explaining, and the words are not to be taken literally, but figuratively. The Midnight, therefore, being (as we say) the dead time of the Night, when Men are usually in their soundest sleep, all things are hush, and in deep silence, and no body thinking of any thing that is then done, signifies to us, that the coming of our Blessed Saviour shall be very sudden and unexpected, and will surprize the World when Men are most secure, and think of no such thing. And this

this we are very plainly taught, 1st. That the time of his Coming is an unknown thing to the World. Secondly, That it shall be very surprizing to the most.

1. Christ's Coming, as the time of it is unknown to the World. Nothing so certain as that he will come, nothing more uncertain than when he will come. Tho' our Saviour in the 24th Chap. of St. *Matthew* does, without all dispute speak chiefly of his coming to take vengeance on the *Jews* his Crucifiers, either in the whole Chapter, or the greatest part of it; yet he speaks of it so, as to intimate it to be a Type and Figure of his last Coming to Judgment, seeing he is answering that Question of his Disciples. v. 3. What shall be the sign of thy Coming, and of the end of the World? And v. 36. He tells them thus. But of that Day, and that Hour knoweth no Man, no not the Angels of Heaven, but the Father, and v. 42. Watch therefore, for ye know not, what Hour your Lord will come. And *Mar.* 13. 35. ye know not when the Master of the House cometh, at Even, or at Midnight, or at the Cock-crowing, or in the Morning. And *Act.* 1. 7. he thus tells his Disciples, It is not for you to know the Times and the Seasons which the Father hath put in his own power.

2. The Coming of Christ shall be very sudden and surprizing to the most. This we are frequently taught by our Blessed Saviour. Whilst all are secure, and at rest, even at Midnight, then suddenly the Bridegroom cometh. He compareth his coming with that of a Thief in the Night, who to be sure gives no notice beforehand of the time he will come, but takes such an Hour for it,

as the Master of the House: least expects him in, *Mat. 24. 43.* So in an Hour when ye think not, the Son of Man cometh. *v. 44.* Again, he compareth himself with a Master taking a long Journey: who hath set out to every one of his Servants the Work which he is to do in the mean time, but tells them not at what Day he will return; but commanded the Porter to watch. *Watch ye therefore, for ye know not when the Master of the House cometh. Mat. 13.* lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. *v. 35. 36.* In a Day when he looked not for him; and in an Hour, that he is not aware of. *Mat. 24. 50.* So to the Church of Sardis, *Rev. 3. 3.* I will come on thee as a Thief, and thou shalt not know what Hour I will come upon thee. *2 Per. 3. 10.* The day of the Lord will come as a Thief in the Night. *And 1 Thes. 5. 1. 2.* Of the times and Seasons, Brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you; for your selves know perfectly that the Day of the Lord so cometh, as a Thief in the Night. For when they shall say, Peace and Safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as Trowall upon a Woman with Child, and they shall not escape. *now son word by*
 30. A Cry shall be made, which will awaken us all to go out to meet Christ Coming. The whole World of Mankind, how soundly soever they shall sleep, yea, even they that sleep in death, and in their Beds of Dust, shall by the Cry which then shall be made, be all roused, and go forth of their Graves to meet the great Judge of the Quick and Dead. For the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven, with a shout, and with the Trump of Gods. And the Dead in Christ shall rise first, and they that are alive and remaining shall be caught up together with them in the Clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. *1 Cor. 15. 51. 52.* He shall send his Angels with the Sound of a Trumpet,

Trumpet, and they shall gather his Elect from the four Winds, from one End of Heaven to another. All that are in the Graves shall hear his Voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good to the Resurrection of Life, and they that have done Evil, unto the Resurrection of Damnation. Joh. 5. 28. For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the Things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. 2 Cor. 5. 10.

I have spoken altogether yet of Christ's last Coming to Judgment, as the Thing principally meant in the Text. But now I would have what I have said, be also applied by every one to the time of his own Death, for there is nothing betwixt that and Judgment that makes any change in our Case, but look how we are prepared for Death, such so are we for Judgment too. Death will certainly come, that needs no proof; and the time when, is uncertain, and it will strangely surprize all that it finds asleep, or living carelessly, whenever it comes. As we meet the Lord then, so shall we meet him in Judgment. If our Lamps do not then burn, there is no Lighting of them afterwards, as we are then prepared or unprepared to meet the Bridegroom, so must we for ever be. And therefore in the application of this Doctrine we must have respect to the Hour of Death, as well as to the Day of Judgment.

4. The Use of this Doctrine is very obvious.
 1. Will Christ certainly come, and that to Judge all Men impartially according to our Works? Then this shews us what too many of us are at this Day. We say, as often as we repeat our Creed, that we believe this, that Christ shall come to Judge the Quick and Dead. I ask then

then all them that say this, Do ye indeed believe so? If not, then are you vile and abominable Dissemblers and Lyars both to God and Man. And that's a Character, which tho' you are ashamed to own, and angry that it should be given you, yet you cannot deny to be your own. Try then your Hearts, and see if you believe what you say, for if you do not, and say so solemnly that you do, are you not Persons of no Faith or Honesty, and therefore unfit to be trusted, but to be accounted Enemies to Society? If you do believe as you say you do, that Christ will come to Judge you, by what do you think he will Judge you? Is it not by the Law of Faith which he hath given us, his holy Gospel? Hear him, for as the Apostle saith, all shall be Judged by the Law under which they have lived. *Rom. 2. 12. As many as have sinned without Law, shall also perish without Law*, that is, they who have no written Law, the Heathens who have only the Law of Nature to live by, if they sin against that Law, (for where there is no Law, there can be no Sin, they must therefore have a Law, if they sin) they shall be condemned in Judgment for it; and as many as have Sinned in the Law, shall be Judged by the Law. That is, the *Jews*, who have sinned against the written Law of *Moses*, shall be Judged according to that Law. So saith Christ *Joh. 12. 48. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him, the Word that I have spoken, the same shall Judge him in the last Day.* And *Rom. 2, 16. God shall Judge the Secrets of Men by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel.* If this be so, how dare such as say they believe that Christ shall come Judge them, live so unsuitably to his Holy Gospel? You must needs own your
 Selves

Selves (whilst you live not very holy Christian Lives) to be the very vilest of all Men, because you are either professed Liars, or manifest Fools: Liars, if you say you believe, and believe not: Fools, if indeed, you do believe, and yet live so as you believe you must be condemned for it.

2. Therefore that we may avoid this just Reproach, let us live as Men that know and believe, that Christ will come and call them to account how they have lived, whether according to his Gospel or no, and will condemn them, or acquit them in Judgment accordingly. It is to this end that he shall come. 2. *Thess.* 1. 8. *The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels, in Flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Can we believe this, and not use all diligence, to live obediently to this Holy Gospel? If ye then, saith St. Peter, call on the Father, who without respect of Persons, Judgeth according to every Man's Works, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. 1 *Pet.* 1. 18. *Unto them that are Contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey unrighteousness, he will render Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and anguish.* Rom. 2. 8. Therefore let us take St. James's good Counsel. Jam. 2. 12. *So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be Judged by the Law of Liberty.* What a Madness is it to profess to believe the Gospel, and not to do our utmost Endeavour, to live exactly according to it, when we know, that if the Gospel which we believe be true, we shall be condemned for not living obediently to it in all things?

3. Take

3. Take heed how we scoff and mock at the talk of Christ's coming, going on confidently in our looseness and carelessness of living, indulging our selves in what we have a mind, saying, let us alone till that day. It's no strange thing to hear of such People, even now in a Christian Nation, because we had warning given us long ago to expect such Profane talkers, and the quality of the Persons describ'd plainly enough to us, that we may know what kind of People they are, and how little to be regarded. 2 Pet. 3. 3. *There shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own Lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming?* These are called filthy Dreamers, like Brutish Beasts, defiling themselves, despisers of Government, &c. These little consider that tho' Christ seem to tarry, yet he will come at the appointed time, and that he tarries so long, is a great mercy to them, if they would but see it. v. 9. *The Lord is not slack in his promise, as some Men count slackness, but is long-suffering to reward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance. He endureth with long-suffering, even the Vessels of Wrath fitted for Destruction.* Rom. 9. 22. *I saith he, gave her space to Repent, and she repented not.* Rev. 2. 21. Beware therefore of putting that day far from you, and looking on it as a great distance, for you know not when it comes. We are not in darkness, that that day should overtake us as a Thief; therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us Watch and be Sober. 1. Thes. 5. 4 5.

4. Because it is at Midnight, and will be sudden and surprizing to many, therefore that's the best advice we can take, to be always ready. O how little is this regarded? And why? We look

look on the day of Judgment as a great way off:
 Yea, but can we think the hour of Death is so
 too? And yet it's all one to us which comes
 first, Death or Judgment. Let us eat and Drink,
 say some, for to morrow we die. Soul take
 thine Ease (say others) Eat, Drink and be Merry,
 for thou hast Goods laid up for many Years.
 Now, how foolishly do both these behave them-
 selves? Well, said our Saviour, thou Fool, to
 him that promised himself many Years, when he
 was not sure of one Night. I am sure, we are
 none of us any surer of one Night than he could
 be. And if to morrow we must die, as the other
 say, is it reasonable to spend this day in eating
 and Drinking? Have we not something else to
 do to prepare our selves for Judgment, and we
 must be prepar'd before we die, if that prove to
 be to morrow, or we must never be prepar'd.
 He that grows confident either ways, and reso-
 lute in his Course, so that he begin to eat and
 drink with the drunken, the Lord of that Servant
 will come in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall
 cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the
 Hypocrites, there shall be weeping and gnashing of
 Teeth. Matt. 24. 5. 1. O, how greatly concerns
 it us, to have our Lamps always lighted up, that
 so the cry when it comes may not confound us.
 That our whole Spirit, and Soul, and Body, may be
 preserv'd blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus
 Christ. 1 Thes. 5. 23. That when he shall appear,
 we may have Confidence, and not be ashamed before
 him at his coming. 1 Joh. 2. 28. What manner of
 Persons ought we to be, in all holy Conversation, and
 Godliness, looking for, and hasting to, the coming of
 the day of God? 2 Pet. 3. 11 12.

Take

Take heed of inconsideration, of laying aside or checking all serious thoughts of this day, and spending your time in vanity and foolish mirth. Would you indeed hear the Trumpet sound to Judgment, or hear the Summons of Death to go out of this World, when you are in such a Temper? And can you tell, that it will not be so? How many Examples have there been, not unlike that of *Belshazzar*, who had their Summons to Death in the midst of their jollity? When they had laid aside the consideration of such things. If the good Man of the house had known (saith Christ) *i. e.* had considered, and seriously thought, what hour the Thief would come, *i. e.* that he might come at any hour for ought he knew, he would have taken more care of his House; he would not have been surpriz'd, and taken without all Defence. *Take heed, lest coming suddenly be find you sleeping.* Matt. 13. 36. That is not considering, secure, and without serious thoughts of him.

Take heed therefore again of provocations to sleep, beware of the pleasures of this Life, lest at any times your Hearts be over-charg'd, surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this Life, and so that day come upon you unawares. *Luk. 21. 34.* For as a Snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the Face of the Earth *v. 35.* *As in the days that were before the Flood, they were Eating and Drinking, Marrying and giving in Marriage, until the Day that Noah entred into the Ark, and knew not until the Flood came and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.* Matt. 24. 28, 29.

Good God, how regardlessly we generally live of these things! Where see we them that look

as if they had any thoughts of dying soon, or of giving an Account of all they do, when they are dead? What a lawless and licentious course of Life do most People Live? And yet we all say we are Christians, and look to be saved by Christ, and believe that he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. But, alas, whoever observes after what a careless manner we live, would never imagine we once thought of any such thing as his coming to judge us.

Matt. XXV. 7, 8.

And all those Virgins arose, and trim'd their Lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your Oil, for our Lamps are gone out.

Here our Blessed Saviour shews us the condition that all Christians will find themselves in, when once they are awak'd out of their security, and their behaviour thereupon. After the cry was made, when they saw that there was no longer delay to be us'd, because the Bridegroom, who had tarried so long, was now at last certainly coming, and just at hand; and now that they must, whether they are prepar'd or no, go forth to meet him. Then they all arose, and trim'd their Lamps. Where observe,

1. All of them, wise and foolish, are at last awak'd.

2. All of them did what then they could to be ready, all arose, bestir'd themselves, and fell to trimming their Lamps, snuffing, cleaning, and supplying them with Oil.

3. The Foolish now find when they come to trim their Lamps, that they are gone out.

4. They then beg Oil of the wise. This we should consider, and think well of in time, that we come not to this sad strait.

1. All of them, wise and foolish, are at last awak'd, the cry that was made, *Behold the Bridegroom cometh.*

Go ye forth to meet him, awaked them all. If nothing else will rouse us from our Couches of rest, where we think our selves well because we are at ease, and not troubled with any concern at all for our latter end; yet the Approach of Death, or a real Apprehension of our being just ready to die, will awake and startle us. There are but two sorts of People, I think, that we can imagine can be unconcern'd at that time, and they are in so much the sadder condition for it.

1. Such as are surpriz'd either by sudden Death, or by some stupifying disease which seizeth the Brain, and bereaves them of their Senses. Indeed, Death it self doth not awaken these to any serious thoughts, for they are not capable of any. Or,

2. Such as have sinned themselves past sense, whose Consciences are fear'd, their Hearts hardened, and they are given over to a reprobate Mind, as God deals with them who do not like to retain him in their knowledge. These two sorts of Sinners will be awak'd with nothing but the Flames of Hell. The one knowing nothing of Death when it overtakes them, never perceiving they are a dying; and therefore if they be not beforehand prepar'd, never can be. The other, tho' they perceive Death Approaching, yet look on it only as the common end of all Men, but never think, or will not believe any thing after it, whereunto it calls them.

But if a Man have his Senses, and be not quite abandoned of God as desperate, I think it is not possible, but whatever he did in his Health, he will then be awak'd into some serious thoughts of his condition. And our own Experience doth witness this, we see not many die sensible, but they are concern'd what will become of them. And, alas! what a confusion must he then needs be in, who is dropping out of the World, and he knows not whither, for want of a timely preparation.

And this very thing should move us, to be every day Examining and Trying our State towards God, and whether our Lamps be in or out, seeing we know the

the cry will come, *Go ye forth, Go ye forth*, to meet your Judge.

This should open our Ears to the Cries that every day we hear, before that last and dismal cry come. *Lift up your Voice like a Trumpet, cry aloud and spare not, said God to the Prophets. Isai. 58, 1.* John the Baptist came with the Voice of one crying in the Wilderness, *prepare ye the way of the Lord.* The Ministers of God are his criers, saying, *awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the Dead, and Christ shall give thee Light.* The Death of our Friends and Neighbours continually calls upon us, to be warned by them to expect our own. And are we resolved not to awake till Sickness come to awake us? Take heed, despise not the voice of Wisdom, doth not Wisdom cry, and the Understanding put forth her Voice? Yes, she crieth in the Gates, unto you, O Men, I call, and my Voice is to the Sons of Men. O ye Simple, understand Wisdom, and ye Fools be ye of an understanding Heart. *Pro. 8, 1.* O! What will be the Issue of neglecting this cry? You will find it at the last to be what you are told by God. *Pro. 1, 24.* Because I have called, and ye refused, they shall call upon me, and I will not answer, *v. 28.* Even then when their fear cometh, which is ever it do, it is most likely to do upon their Death Bed.

Being awake, all of them did what they then could, to make ready to go forth, all arose and be- stirred themselves, and fell to trimming their Lamps. No persuasions will prevail with Sinners that have got a habit of Sinning securely, to get Oil, and trim their Lamps in time. But as long as the Bridegroom tarrieth, they are still pleasing themselves either with thoughts, that there is no such Person to come, or that he will not come at all, or that he will tarry yet a while longer, and they need not Trim their Lamps yet. But when Death is within sight, when Men begin to believe that they can live no longer, they usually also begin to do those things which they laugh'd at others, it may be before, for being so careful to do. Now they begin to prepare
F f 2 them

themselves, as well as they can, for dying, and going forth of the World. They begin to think then with themselves: What tho' I know not whether there be such a Person as this Bridegroom, or no? Yet because I know not but there is such an one, and I am now going to see him, if there be one to be seen, it behoves me to be as well fitted to meet him as I can, lest I should meet him to my sorrow. If I be not prepared to meet him, and yet shall meet him, how will he look upon me? What must I expect from him? Before I shall have a very sad Welcome, and if I take what pains I can to fit my self, tho' I meet him not, yet I am sure to fare no worse for it. And therefore I will now however arise, and trim up my Lamp. These thoughts approaching, Death cannot but put us upon thinking, if we be then capable of it, and be not forsaken of God. But now see the misery of it,

3. The foolish Virgins now find when they come to trim their Lamps, that they are gone out, and that the little Oyl they had is quite spent, and none is left to supply them; nor know they which way to get them lighted up. Here's the sad and bitter fruit of delay, and a late, or death-bed Repentance. They are awakened, and see themselves in a condition like to him, who is awakened with the cry of Fire, and when he looks about him, and fain would save himself, he sees the house in Flames about him, and finds he has now slept too long, and there is no way to escape.

The secure Sinner lives in a great deal of confidence, that he's in no worse a Case than other Men, and shall be as happy as they when he dieth; but, alas, when is that whilst he looks on Death as a great way off, every shew of being Religious satisfies him, if he say his Prayers, and come to Church, and live a sober, temperate and honest Life, all's well enough with him, his Lamp burns bright enough, he thinks, and there's no danger. But the first appearance of Death affrights him, and spoils all his Confidence. For entering upon an Examination of himself, which he seldom

troubled his Head with before; the apprehension of present danger makes him impartial, and in good earnest, and then he quickly perceives that he never had been so before, but had play'd and dallied with God, and his own Soul all his Life long.

Now he would find Faith, but cannot, for he had never well considered and digested the grounds and reasons of it, but took things on trust, and so never had any true Belief; or he never fed and strengthened it by Meditation and Prayer, nor exercised it in good Works to keep it alive, and so finds it was never lighted up, or it is gone out. Whilst the wise Virgins have nothing to do, but to trim their Faith; they find it there, and it gives Light, only by exercising then some few seasonable Considerations, they make it more bright and clear, as is needful in that dark Hour.

Fain they would find Repentance, but, alas, 'tis not to be found. 'tis gone out whatever it was; they had, it may be, sometimes confessed their Sins, and then they sinned them over again; they had fasted and prayed now and then a Day, and then returned to their Rioting and Drunkenness, Folly and Wantonness again; they had sometimes sorrow'd a little, and shed it may be, some Tears in a melancholy fit, and sudden fear, lest they should perish, and then rejoiced and delighted in their Sins again. Now therefore they find, that their Life hath been spent in Sin and Vaniry; and now they are only sorry, that they are going to be called to account for it; and cannot find that they hate their Sins, wherein they have been so much delighted; but only that they are afraid they shall be punished, and pay dearly for that delight; Nay, they find plainly, they have so accustomed themselves to delight in their Sins, that tho' they cannot act them, yet they love them still. They never considered thoroughly the Nature of Sin, and the Evils that are in it, and therefore cannot hate it as they ought; they never took notice of half the Sins they committed, but through inconsideration took many great Sins for small ones, and acted them freely without trouble of Con-

science, and therefore they cannot repent of any thing, but that they have made themselves miserable. Whilst the wise Virgins lived in a continual hatred, and shunning of all Sin great and small and never committed it but upon some surprize, or very strong Temptation coming suddenly on them, and never continu'd in it after they discern'd it, but went mournfully all their Days because of their Folly in consenting to it. And therefore now find it easy to trim it up, by some few severe Reflections on their Life past.

They would fain now find the Love of God in their Hearts, but no such thing can they find, whatever they had of it, it is gone out. They find plainly, that they never loved him at all, but in truth hated the Thoughts of him, and would gladly have been rid of his Government. And when they came to worship him, it was either for fear only, or for Custom and Fashion's Sake in a meer Formality, or for some carnal and Worldly Ends, and not in pure Love to him. They cannot find that they were willing to lose any thing for him, or do any thing, tho' never so hard to please him, nor would leave off the practice of their Follies and Vanities for his Sake, nor that they laboured to do every thing to his Honour and Glory, or were well content to be in any condition rather than displease or dishonour him. And now they cannot love him, but fear him as a Righteous Judge. Whilst the wise Virgins having set their Affections all along upon God, have now nothing to do but to trim up their Love, by feeding it with the comfortable Thoughts of God's Goodness, both in himself and to them.

Finally, They would fain find that they had sincerely obey'd the Gospel of Christ, and adorned it with a holy Conversation; but no such thing can be found, but that they have delighted in the Works of Darkness, which had no Agreement with the Light of the Gospel. And now the Night is come, and they can work no more, and so cannot perform the Obedience to Christ, which he will accept. And thus their vain Hope, wherein they comforted themselves all their Life long is quite gone out, having no sincere Obedi-

ence

ance to feed it, no purifying of themselves as God is pure, on which their Hope should have depended. Whilst the wise Virgins having sincerely endeavour'd all their Days to obey the Gospel, have Hope in their End, only they are now to trim their Hope by consideration of God's sure Promises to the Pure in Heart; and to consummate their Obedience, by patiently Bearing their last Sickness, and cheerfully leaving all to enjoy God.

This will certainly be the condition of every considering Man when he is about to die. And now let us think of it in time, whether it be not good for us, if it be possible, to prevent our coming into so hopeless a state. And there is no way in the World to prevent it but one, and that is, to get Oil enough in our Vessels, and never to suffer our Lamps to go out, so long as we live. Be always examining and trying them, and as we can find Opportunities of trimming them, lay hold on them. For consider, *arbitrarily*. How the Foolish begin to beg Oil of the Wise, they said unto them, give us of your Oil. Observe here,

1. What an alteration the present apprehension of Dying will make in Men's Judgments. Whilst bad Men are in good health, and in a prosperous state, they are not easily brought to think hardly of themselves; nay, they are generally very wise in their own Conceits, and think all Fools, that are more Religious than themselves. But when they look upon themselves as Dying Men, they begin to be of another Opinion, and acknowledge those to be the wisest Persons, who provided in time against an Evil Day. O how could they now wish, that they had taken as wise a Course as they did, whom they were wont to deride for it. It is plain, that ill People make little use of their reason till they are forc'd to it, for that would Judge always aright, would they give it leave always to Judge for them. But it is their Lusts by which they are govern'd, and now they Judge of every thing, commend or condemn it, as it agrees or disagrees with their Lusts. But when the approach of it will suffer Lusts to be no longer gratified, then reason is set at Liberty,

and gives its Sentence freely and impartially, as the Wise Man expresseth it, *Wisd. 5. 3. 4.* This is he whom we had sometimes in derision, and a Proverb of Reproach. *We Fools accounted his Life madness, and his End to be without Honour.* How doth the approach of death change the Scene? Then what would he give, that he had been but as wise, as he whom before he counted mad?

2. What pitiful Shifts ill People are put to when they come to die, to still and quiet their troubled and troublesome Consciences. They beg, where nothing is to be had. Give us, say they, of your Oil, when they know that no such shift can be made. When they might have received good by them, they would not accept of it. Good Advice and seasonable admonitions they were ever ready to give them, such, as if followed, would have prevented all their present trouble: But this was rejected, and it may be scorned, and even their good Prayers for them despised and laughed at. But now 'tis, *Give us some of your Oil.* Help us now, or we are undone. O what a confusion are such Sleepers in, what a Loss are they at; any thing now to make them sleep again, to give them a little ease and quiet of mind; how welcome would it be!

This in the Church of Rome is much prevented to very ill purpose. Poor People are deluded with a little Superstition, instead of sincere Religion and Piety. Tho' one be guilty of gross Immoralities, yet Confession to a Priest, and Absolution upon it, and a little easy Penance, will atone for all. Masses will go a great way, and to have the Body of God, and extream Unction, is thought enough to make one die in Peace, and the Conscience of his Sins need no more trouble him. Here, saying, give us of your Oil prevails, 'tis granted, and all 'tis hoped, is well.

Some such Art there are too among Protestants. Persuade the Man to believe he is elected, and then God (as he is to believe too) will see no Sin in him. Show him by some Signs that once he had Grace, and then he must believe he could never lose it.

And what do the generality of us, but seek for Shifts to go quietly out of the World into Hell. Beg of all to pray for us, send for the Minister to do so too, receive the Body and Blood of Christ, resolve to leave our Sins, when they have left us; and never to live wickedly any more, when we know we must live no longer. Alas, where the Life hath been spent Irreligiously, all this doth but shew in what confusion we are in, and that like a Man ready to be drowned, we would fain lay hold on any little Twig to save our selves.

But all this while we forget, that we cannot be saved unless our Lamps be lighted, and they cannot be lighted without Oil, no Shift without Oil will do. And this being spent, and our Lamps gone out, unless God will yet grant us time enough both to provide, and to use it too, we, for all other Shifts we can make, are in a perishing Condition.

Matt. XXV. 9.

But the wise answer'd, saying, not so, lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell and Buy for your selves.

THE Virgins who had been so negligent, and improvident, as not to bring Oil enough with their Lamps, became sensible of their Folly when it was too late. They found that when the Bridegroom was at the Door, and they were to go out to meet him, their Lamps were gone out. And no way could think on, but to borrow Oil of their Companions; but their Companions had none to spare them, as appears by the Answer they here give them. Give us (say they) of your Oil, help us in this strait, or we are undone. The wise Virgins, we may suppose, were so good natured, that they were very willing to do the Foolish any kindness that lay in their power to do, but this they could not do. We have here,

1. Their

1. Their Denial, *Not so*, with the reason of it, *Left there be not enough for us and you.*

2. Their Advice. *But go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for your Selves.*

1. Their Denial, *The Wise answered, saying, not so, is, expect it not of us, we cannot if we would, give you of our Oil; and if we could, yet we will not, for a good reason, i. e. Left there be not enough in our Vessels both for us and you: Observe here,*

1. It is not in the power of any one how good soever, to communicate his goodness to another, to make over any part of his Righteousness unto any one. There never was but one Man in the World, who can save others by his Righteousness, and that is the Man Christ Jesus, who is God as well as Man. There is no doubt of it, but every good Christian is willing to do all that he can for his Neighbour's Salvation, he will afford him all the helps he can, both by his Counsel and Directions, and his good Example, and his hearty Prayers for him. Thus good Men may befriend their Neighbours very much, where their Kindness will be accepted, and therefore they will, and ought to do so. And if they could communicate of their own Righteousness to them, they would think themselves bound to do so too, but it is not in their power to do it. They can merit nothing for themselves by their Righteousness, and much less can they merit for others. So that the Doctrine of the Church of Rome is a false and deceitful Doctrine, which teacheth, that one may merit not only for himself, but for others, and Men, who have lived wickedly, may be profited by the Merits of the Saints. But to shew us, that this is false, and that we cannot safely rely on any Righteousness of another, but that of Jesus Christ only. Observe,

2. Good Men are always humble; how good soever they be more than others are, and acknowledge that they have Righteousness little enough for themselves, and none to spare for others. When they have done all they can do, yet, tho' they had done all that God commanded them to do, yet they

confess

confess they are unprofitable Servants, for they have done but that which it was their Duty to do. Luk. 17. 10. Nay, they are always jealous of the scantiness of their own Righteousness, lest they should not have enough for themselves. And indeed the best hath great Reason to be so, seeing there is no Man living that sinneth not; *He that says he hath no Sin doth but deceive himself.* 1 Joh. 1. 8. *Yea in many things we offend all,* Jam. 3. 2. and therefore if God shall enter into Judgment with us, and make us no Abatements in mercy, no Man Living shall be Justified, or accepted as Righteous. Rom. 3. 20. But must be fain to lie to the Righteousness and Merits of Jesus Christ, to have his Sins covered, and his Unrighteousness forgiven. And then how should he who hath so little Righteousness, and so many Sins, that stands in need himself of another's Righteousness, and of a Pardon, Merit, or have Righteousness to spare for another? So absurd is the Doctrine of the Church of Rome, that some holy Persons do not only all that which by any Law of God they are bound to do, but a great deal more, so that they have Righteousness more than they themselves stand in need of to entitle them to Heaven. And all this which they have to spare, is in the Disposal of the Church, or Pope; and he can dispense it in Pardons, and Indulgences to them who stand in need of it, upon such Terms, as he seeth good. But I would desire every one to take care to provide for himself, and not to rely on this Imaginary Treasure. For the wise Virgins take this course, and the Foolish only would be beholden to others. I have never heard of any pious and holy Person, that hath not confessed, that he hath too little Righteousness for himself, and not enough without the Righteousness of Christ to save him.

3. Another thing we may here observe. That every one's own Salvation ought to be dearest to him. A good Man will indeed venture all that he hath but his Soul, to help forward the Salvation of others; he is ready after the Example of his Blessed Saviour, to lay

lay down his Life for the Brethren. *Joh. 3. 16.* But he is not willing to venture his Damnation for any one, how dear soever to him. He will not venture the Loss of God and Heaven. nor the Benefits of a Saviour for his best Friend. This may be learn'd from the Answer of the wise Virgins, *Lest there be not enough for us and you.* Whereby they do not acknowledge that they have not enough for both, but little enough for themselves, but intimate withal, that if they could communicate to them of what they had, yet would they not in this case do it, because they should so hazard their own, having too little. the going out of their own Lamps, and for that a shutting out of Doors by the Bridegroom. Let every one first see, that he work out his own Salvation with Fear and Trembling. *Phil. 2. 12.* and then for the Salvation of others do all that he can, tho' he should lose any temporal Advantages by it, how great soever they be, tho' it were with *St. Paul* to be offered up upon the Service of their Faith. *Phil. 2. 17.*

This you may think a needless caution, and that few are so charitable to others, as to be damned for them. I think so too. Yet are there some useful Lessons to be learn'd by it.

1. This shews us the Sin of some in the Church of *Rome*, who make use of *pæ Fraudes*, Religious Frauds, or Cheats, as they call them, for the propagating and upholding their Religion; and very ill things they will allow and commend too, so it be for the Honour of Mother Church, as they speak, Men may be Traytors, and murder, and Lie, and swear falsely in Judgment, so it tend to the good of their Church. This is a spending of Oil too fast, parting with their own Innocence, for the pretended good of others.

2. Hereby we are directed how to behave our selves in case of Scandal, or giving Offence to weak Brethren, and endangering their Souls thereby. For howsoever Church may Command us to abstain from every thing that is in our Power, and is not a Duty for their sakes; yet if they will be of-

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fended, and take occasion to Sin and Perish by our doing our Duty, they must do so for us, we cannot help it; we must see that our Lamps have Oil, how much soever they are offended at, or what ill use soever they will make of it.

3. Here they are justly reprov'd, who are willing to spend their Oil, not for the Salvation but Damnation of others. Who are willing to let their Lamps go out for Company, to please such as they call their Loving Neighbour and Friends. This is a Friendship, I confess, beyond the highest Christian Charity. Charity will Command us to do any thing, but to Sin and be Damned for our Neighbour's Salvation. But it is too much good Neighbourhood to Sin, and go to Hell too, rather than break Friendship now.

2. The next thing to be consider'd, is, the advice here given, *Go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for your selves.* This seems to be Ironical, and spoken in a kind of Mockery; for it was now too late to go to buy Oil, when the Bridegroom was at the Door: and so it seems to have this Sence. See now your Folly, see what you have got by your neglect, and taking no care to buy whilst you had time and opportunity, now go and buy where you can. But we'll suppose the wise Virgins to be better Natur'd and Manner'd, than to insult over their Companions in this strait, or to jeer them in their misery.

However, good Christians signified by the wise Virgins are so, and Pity and Commiserate, rather than Triumph over the Folly of the Wicked. The Answer therefore implies thus much.

1. What course ought to have been taken by 'em.

2. An Admonition, such as can then be given, to use the best means they can think of in that short time they had.

1. What should have been done. This, tho' it had been omitted, yet they are to be put in mind of it.

1. The thing neglected, was getting Oil whilst it was to be had. God had not made it necessary for

for us to have Oil in our Lamps, to have a sincere Heart, and a holy Life, mortified Affections, holy Desires, governed Passions, and a Conversation Heavenly, suitable to our Profession; if he had not provided sufficient helps and means, for the obtaining and upholding of all these. The Ministry of his Word and Sacraments, serious Meditation, and deliberate consideration of our own Original and Nature; of God's Attributes and Dominion over us; of our latter end, and of both the rewards of Righteousness, and the punishment of Disobedience and Wickedness, and devout Prayer for God's Holy Spirit; these, and the like, are means that we need not want; and these duly used, would furnish us with Oil, and keep our Lamps burning to the last. The neglecting of those helps, is the reason that we want Oil, when we become most sensible of the need of it. But, alas, we mind other things, and let slip the opportunity. We should buy it, purchase it at the expence of things we are not willing to part with for it. Our Ease and Sloth, our vain Pleasures and Vanities, our inordinate Desires of Wealth, and our proud Ambitious Designs; these, and such like, are to be freely given up and paid away for this Oil, and therefore we are not willing to make the purchase, till the Market is over.

2. Where there has been such a neglect, tho' it may be too late, yet is it fit we should, even late as it is, be reminded of it. 'Tis fit we be brought to as humbling a Sense of our Folly, as 'tis possible. Where a Duty has been omitted, Self-Condemnation, and an humble acknowledgment of it becomes our Duty; and where we gave not God the honour of a timely and constant Obedience, it is a Duty to give him the Glory of an humble Confession. And if this come too late to be accepted, so as to acquit and pardon us for all, yet may it be taken in part, and something of the punishment may be abated. However, whether it profit the Sinner or no, 'tis fit we should endeavour, by reminding him of it, that God may have the Glory of his Confession.

tion. As *Isaiah* admonished *Achan* to confess, and thereby give Glory to God. *Isa. 7. 19.*

2. An Admonition, such as in that strait could be, must be given. That seeing there had been so foolish a neglect, and it was come to this, that it was a great question, whether any time was now remaining or no, between that and the Bridegroom's entrance, they should do however all that could be done for the time. Try what was possible for them to do.

The wise Virgins could not assure them, that there was any Oil to be bought at that time of the Night, nor whether they could meet with those that sold it, nor whether the Bridegroom would be so long in coming, that they might get what they wanted before he was come; but yet because they could not help them as they had desired, they counsel them as well as they can in so difficult a case.

Here we see all the comfort that can be administered to a late Penitent, or one that has lived Wickedly or Carelessly, till he is now near the time of his Death. Such an one is in a very doubtful condition, and no one can assure him what will become of him. His case is exceeding dangerous, and no Man is able to administer any solid ground of comfort to him. And yet in Charity it becomes us to labour all we can to keep him from despair. All that can be said in so sad a case, comes but to this.

That such an one be admonished not to presume that he can be saved upon any other account, but the having a real Righteousness of his own, which way soever he can now come by it. Christ himself will not save by his Righteousness, any one that has not a real Righteousness of his own; that is, who is not sincerely Penitent. All the Saints in Heaven can do him no good, nor if he had had Righteous and Faithful *Abraham* to his Father, will it signify any thing to him, unless he have a renewed Heart, and changed Affections, and be a new Man before he dies.

2. That

we can have but very little comfort.

That seeing he has neglected this, and driven it to this last push; let him not rely upon any Prayer or Acts of Devotion, which others can perform for him. These he ought to desire, but must not rely on them, but rather do all that ever he can for himself. Examine his Life, confess his Sins, beg Pardon, make full satisfaction where he can, renew his Powers, and do all the good things that he can do in the short time he has to live.

And when all this is done, all the comfort which can be given him is this. But that we do not know, but Christ may stay so long for him, till he hath got such a stock of Holiness, as he will accept of. We do not know but he may admit him before the door be quite shut; or if he be shut out of Heaven, we do not know but the course he now takes, may keep him from sinking so deep into Hell, as otherwise he would do.

Let us now seriously consider all this in time, before the time of Sicknes or extream age come. O, why should we be so foolish, as by the neglecting of our present Duty, and for the enjoyment of some vain Pleasure, which will last but a very little while, to run ourselve into this uncomfortable strait? Why should we wilfully bring ourselve into a condition wherein, how greatly soever we need it, how earnestly soever we desire it, how gladly soever our Friends would help us, yet no body in the World can Administer any certain comfort to us. And yet into this condition doth every one certainly bring himself that lives loosely and carelessly, and not answerably in all things to his Holy Profession. Had we not better abate something of our Carnal Pleasures and Delights, want a little more of our own Wills and Humours, drudge a little less for the World, and the fading things of the World, be a little more serious and thinking, and use a little less Mirth and Laughter, than fall into this uncomfortable condition; that when we know we must part with all the things we have ever been fond of, and can have no more comfort

from

from any of them; we can have no comfort at all. No comfort in parting with what we have had and loved, and no comfort from any hope we can then meet with of what shall befall us afterwards. Nothing but this, it may be, that God will yet have mercy on us; no body knows certainly that he will not, but 'tis come to that, that no body can tell us, and God himself hath not told us, whether he will have mercy on us, or no.

Spoken by Matt. XXV. 10, 11, 12.

And while they went to buy the Bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the Marriage, and the Door was shut.

Afterwards came also the other Virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

But he Answered, and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

WE are now come to the last part of this Parable, wherein we are taught what will certainly be the issue of a careless Life. At the news of the Bridegroom's coming, the foolish Virgins found themselves, through their improvidence, unprovided of Oil for their Lamps, and without that, they had as good sit still, as go to meet the Bridegroom. And finding that they could not borrow, they ran to Buy. But whilst they ran about to buy, the Bridegroom, met by those who had their Lamps Lighted, entered together with them to the Marriage, and the other were finally shut out, so that no intreaty could prevail for admission.

Here then all that spend their time carelessly, and Live not in a constant preparation for Death and Judgment, may see what they are to expect from Jesus Christ, at his coming to Judge the World in Righteousness. And let me beseech you all to think of it in time, especially you that are young, and are apt to fancy that you have Day enough before you, and that tho' you play and sport a great part of it away, yet you may do all you have to do before Night. We that are old, know that our Day is shutting in, it is already but Twilight with us, and it darkens apace. If we have Slumbered and Slept till now, we can have but very faint hopes that ever we shall Awake to our comfort. There is

more hope of you that are yet young, if you will take warning in time ; but if you will not, you are growing every day older, and it will quickly be as much too late for you, as it is for any of us who are already old, to think of getting the Oil you want. Let us all then consider,

1. What a change the apprehension of imminent danger, and dying presently, will make in us. How ready we will be to take that advice, when it is probably too late ; that we despised when it was seasonable, and might have done us good. Now when the Market is open, and all may have what Goods they need, we will Sleep on, let us be called on never so often ; but when 'tis ended almost, then we are in haste, and run to buy. What a strange Folly is this ? And yet how many are guilty of it ? Speak to one in Health and Prosperity, Young and Lively, to be Devout and Sober, to ply his Work for his Soul and Heaven, and to take heed of Sloth, Idleness, vain Sports, and sinful Pleasures ; you had as good hold your Peace, all Admonitions are disregarded as unseasonable. Yet these very Persons when they are Sick, or think themselves in danger of Death, will, with Tears and sad Sighs, beg your Prayers and good Advice, and will promise fair, and do all they can then do to be saved. Even the worst of Livers are daily observed to be thus changed through fear of Death. And they that are not so, are either such as are not sensible of any thing because of their Disease, or not sensible of their Sin and Danger through a reprobate Mind,

2. That for one who hath lived carelessly and loosely, to fit himself for Heaven, requireth some considerable time ; it will be some while doing, and therefore the more dangerous is it to defer it to that time, which a thousand to one, will be much too short to do it in. Tho' the change but now mentioned, be made on a sudden, he that before delay'd would now give all the World he had not done so. He feared not to die quickly before, but now he doth ; he would take no pains to prepare himself before, but now would take any. Tho' he's thus far changed by the cry of the Bridegroom's coming, yet there's no other change necessary to compleat Repentance ; which it is to be feared cannot be made in the little time behind, when old Age and Sickness takes hold on us. Ill habits are not in a moment changed into

into contrary good ones. Love to Sinful Pleasures, is not suddenly changed into the Love of God and Holiness; along Life of Sin and Vanity is not quickly examined, all Sins called to mind, all confessed, restitution to our Neighbours made, and every old reckoning set strait. That which Christ requires is an Holy Life, and Fruits meet for Repentance, and a Conversation according to the Gospel of Christ, and he has not assured us, that any other kind of Repentance will be accepted but this. A turning from a Vein and Wicked, to a Serious and Godly Life, is that which the Gospel requireth. And how much of our time so well spent after Repentance, God will accept for the whole, that should have been so spent, he hath not told us. And its not very likely, that he will accept of that little in our last Sicknes, or extream old Age, wherein we can do little or nothing well, if at all.

3. Nay, 'tis ten to one that Christ will come before we can meet with that which we are seeking for, to fit us for his coming. *While they went to buy, the Bridegroom came.* No little Confusion must that poor Soul be in, which, when it is leaving the Body and this World, hath no Preparation made for the next World. Where shall it begin its work? And how shall it find out all that it hath to do? And how shall it go about it? Alas! all's now on a sudden to be done; and nothing learnt, no Experience gain'd, no hopes of the time that seems necessary; even through despair of ever performing such a Task to purpose, it will be apt to give over thinking of it; whilst it is thus in a maze and perplexity, Christ comes and calls it away. What less can the careless Sinner expect? All the time that Christ tarried, was giving it in tender mercy and Compassion, that it might make it self ready; none of us can complain that God is too hasty with us; how long doth he spare us, and suffer us to live, and give us all things needful both for this Life, and the next? And yet we slight this his kindness, and sleep out all this time; that is, we spend it in Sin and Folly, and always in something else that it was not given us for. We resolve to have our Wills and Humour, our Lusts as long as we can, tho we know we dishonour and displease him thereby. And can we now hope, that when he is coming, and by Age or Sicknes tells us so, that he will stop in

his way, and stay yet till we have time enough to make our selves ready for him? How many such warnings by sickness, or other sad accidents, hath he already given many of us? How suddenly hath he come upon others before our Eyes, to warn us to take heed to our selves? If all this would not do, can we hope that he will stay just as long as we will? If we do, we must do it without any reason in the World for it.

4. Whensoever we are called hence by Death, none but they shall enter into blessedness, who are found ready for it. *And they that were ready went in with him to the Marriage, and the Door was shut.* There's no other Preparation for a happy Death, but a Holy Life. There may be good Directions given to sick People, for the trimming of their Lamps to make them burn the brighter; 'tis good and fit then to review our Repentances, and quicken all our Graces, and Meditate on the joys we are entering upon, and to consider the mercies of God to enflame our Love towards him, and the Vapories of the World, to make us the more contentedly to leave it, and many such things as these; but without an Holy and Christian Life hath been led by us, tho' in much weakness and imperfection, yet in sincerity and in truth; if we have not this to reflect upon in our sickness, that we have liv'd in the fear of God, and exercised our selves always in keeping a Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards Men. If our rejoycing be not this, *the Testimony of our Conscience, that in simplicity and godly Sincerity, not in fleshly Wisdom, but by the Grace of God, we have had our Conversation in the World.* 2 Cor. 1. 12. I know of no rejoycing at all that we can have, in that melancholly time of sickness or Age. They that are thus ready shall enter into joy everlasting with the blessed Jesus, but the Door is shut against all others. This therefore must be our care if ever we hope to enter into Heaven and be happy, to live in the constant Practice of all Christian Vertues, that so we may be in a constant readiness, whensoever we shall be call'd out of the World.

5. That no Prayers or Importunities, no Cries or Tears will prevail, or gain us Admission into Heaven, if we be not thus by a constant course of Holiness prepared

pared for it. The door will be shut, and afterwards, tho' the foolish Virgins come and cry, saying, *Lord, Lord, open to us*, yet will Christ reply. *Verily, I say unto you. I know you not.* Observe here,

1. That afterwards, when the door was shut, these foolish Virgins came; they had confidence yet to come, in hopes to be let in. Wicked Men's confidence doth often out-last the day of Grace, and hold out, when they have no reason at all for it. It may be observed in dying Sinners, when they are told of the danger they are in, and how necessary Repentance is, and a Faith that worketh by Love, it is hard to beat down their Confidence: Still they will say, they hope God will shew them mercy, they hope they Believe, they hope they Repent, and so they hope to be Saved? Yea,

2. They cry, *Lord, Lord open to us*, they hope to be Heard and Pityed for their earnest Importunity, for their Cries and Tears, calling Christ their Lord, and begging of him to open to them. And truly, this is it that a great many, 'tis to be feared, deceive themselves into Hell withal. They can say often and earnestly, *God be merciful to me*, and this they hope will do. This, indeed is all that too many mean, they know of no other, nor will learn to understand that it can be any thing else, but a sorrow that they have done amiss, and a confession that they are Sinners, and deserve Hell, and a crying with Tears for Mercy. If they find they can do thus, they think they have got Oil enough, tho' late, and are confident they shall be admitted in. But,

3. All that they shall get by all this, will be the sad answer of the Bridegroom to the foolish Virgins, *verily, I know you not, i. e.* I know you not to belong to me, or that ye have any relation to me. I own you not for Christians, whatever you call your selves, nor do your Cries and Tears move me now at all. It may do well to consider what People in this Case are apt to plead for themselves, and what the Blessed Saviour of Sinners, when he comes to Judge them in Righteousness, will answer to it.

1. They will be apt to say, *Lord, tho' we were not ready just when the first notice was given us by Sickness, of thy coming to call us out of the World; yet, to shew how desirous we were of being entertained by thee, we have since done all that we could, to make our selves*

ready for thee, and therefore tho' a little with the latest, yet thou seest we are come, and we hope thou wilt not reject us.

Now to this our Blessed Jesus will answer, *I know you not*. For ye are none of those that ever loved me, or desired my appearance; but had rather by far I had staid away, and that ye might have Slept on still in your Sins. Had ye loved and desired my appearance, ye would for Love of me have taken care before-hand to please me, and to be ready as these were. All the pains that ye have taken since the cry of my coming was heard by you, proceeds only from your fear of Hell, and desire to be happy somewhere, now ye can live no longer. This fear set you on work, but no love to me. A day of Mercy you had, and ye have Slept it out, and nothing but just Judgment remains, and ye are not able to abide it, for I see not your Righteousness, the Oil in your Lamps, which you must be tried by.

2. They will be apt to say again, yes Lord; We were Baptized in thy Name, Renouncing all other Lords but thee; we have always Worshipped God in thy Name, and have constantly called thee our Lord and Saviour, and thou art the Lord our Righteousness; we never trusted to our own Righteousness, but to thine only; on thee we have believed, that we shall be saved by thy Merits; and thou didst promise that whosoever believeth on thee shall not perish, but have everlasting Life. And therefore we hope thou wilt open unto us.

To this Christ will answer, *I know you not* any otherwise than as false Rebels, who have constantly broken the Covenant of Baptism, whereby ye were bound to be mine, and have all your days served those very Lords, whom ye then Renounced; and why called ye me Lord, Lord, whilst ye did not the things that I said unto you? *Lu. 6. 46.* Ye never Worshipped God but formally, and for a Cloke to your Wickedness, and this was all the Righteousness ye trusted to. Ye believed not in me as your Lord; but only relied on me vainly as your Saviour, when you would not obey me as your Lord. Had ye believed in me, ye would have believed my Word, that no Faith without Works can save a Man, and that no Unrighteous Man can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And because ye have not been Holy and Righteous, I know you not.

3. Yea;

3. Yea, but they will be apt to plead: We confess we have been Sinners, and through infirmity we Slept too long; but we were awakened with the cry of thy coming, and have never been idle since, but have run to buy Oil, and having got it we are come. For we are brought to Repentance, we confess and forsake our Sins; and thy Apostle hath told us, that if we confess our Sins, thou art faithful and just to forgive us our Sins, *Joh. 1. 1. 9.* we claim therefore thy promise to the Penitent, and hope thou wilt yet open to us.

To this Christ will say, I know no such Penitents as you; who have Slept out the whole Season of repentance, and now confess it only for fear you should suffer Vengeance. You Slept wilfully, and not thro' Infirmity, for then ye would have driven by all means to keep yourselves Awake, which ye have not done. Ye delighted in Sin, and would yet be very well pleased to live in it still, therefore, *depart, I know you not.*

Let us all then, as we desire to die with comfort, and to be admitted into Joy when we die, labour to be always ready for God's call. And let us not delay, and put off our Repentance, and change of Life so long, till Christ disown us for his. What is it, I beseech you, that we can flatter ourselves withal? Is there any one promise to be found in our Bibles, that one repenting in his last Sickness shall be saved? And tho' we dare not judge that all, who defer their Repentance till then, are certainly Damn'd, and would fain hope as charitably and favourably as we can of such Persons; will any therefore rely on so slender a Foundation as this, to continue in a careless way of Living, only because good Christians dare not say that such an one cannot be saved? One would think that Salvation and Damnation are things of so much weight, and so great concernment to us, that we should not securely put it to the venture which of them should be ours, and take the more unlikely course of the two, for no other reason but because some good men would hope the best of us, when yet neither hath God made us any promise, nor can men give us the least reason to hope that it shall go well with us. Men only say, they know not whether God will save a late Penitent or no. Yet may Christ say for all that, to all such Penitents, *I know you not.*

FINIS

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Place this at the end of the Book.

